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by [maquira](#)

Summary

By day, Harry works as a lowly assistant to his boss: the cruel, controlling Tom Riddle.

By night, he lives, breathes, and writes fanfiction. And when he's not writing, he's obsessing over the work of his favorite Ao3 author: Lord_Voldemort_.

So, of course, it's only a matter of time before Harry gets caught reading Voldemort's latest fanfiction at work... by none other than his boss.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Today was going to be a *gorgeous* day.

Harry yawned around his strawberry-flavored lollipop as he got into the glass elevator, pressing the button to the top floor with his elbow. He leaned back against the cool, transparent walls, taking in the shimmering waters and the reflective surfaces of towering skyscrapers.

He closed his eyes, basking in the sunlight that streamed through the glass. *Sunlight*. Harry smiled softly, eyes still closed. The Seattle sun was actually *shining* in December—miracles did happen every so often.

Yes, today was going to be a gorgeous day, he thought, sighing wistfully.

And Harry would be spending it at all indoors, at the mercy of his cruel, unrelenting boss and toxic superiors.

As the elevator dinged, reality seemed to shake him from his wandering daze. *Wake up*, his survival instincts yelled. *You are now entering the beast's den*.

Harry walked out of the elevator the way a prisoner walked a ship's plank: slowly, staring at the vast ocean in helpless terror, the same way he now gazed at the shimmering, expensive-looking logo of Morsmordre Inc.

He approached the glass doors to the office, swiping his card for entry as his eyes stayed glued to the eerie symbol.

The Morsmordre logo was an emerald green, writhing snake emerging from a ghastly skull. It was oddly gruesome and rather inappropriate, especially considering that it belonged to one of the world's top publishing companies. A primarily *educational* publishing company, where K-12 textbooks were the money-makers.

And yet, Harry couldn't imagine a logo to fit the publishing company more. *Snakes*. His upper lip curled in disgust. Indeed, the company's headquarters was filled with thirsty, ruthless *snakes*, who terrorized him every second of every minute of every hour from the moment he stepped a foot inside—

"Potter!" Parkinson said sharply, jarringly. "Where have you *been*?"

"Good morning, Parkinson!" Harry greeted pleasantly as he entered the office, perfectly aware that he was a couple minutes late. "The coffee line was a *bit* long today—"

Parkinson fixed him with a stern, serious look. "Mr. Riddle's been calling for you."

Harry froze.

"Oh?" he uttered, still smiling painfully.

Fuck. Riddle usually didn't call him in for another hour regarding daily reports. He'd needed at least *half an hour* more to brush up the trend analysis report—

He clenched his papers even more tightly and speed-walked through the halls, knocking on the door to his boss's office. The golden plaque upon the door shimmered tauntingly, ominously.

Tom Riddle Jr.,
Executive Vice President

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. What excuse would Harry possibly give *now* —?

“Enter,” drawled a low baritone voice, smooth and put-together as ever.

Harry slammed the door open, holding out the black coffee his boss had requested. “Sorry, sir. Lines were a bi—”

“Shut up,” Riddle said lowly, pleasantly, his casual cadence never changing. He might have been commenting on the weather, for all his tone implied.

But the dark, ominous glint in his stormy eyes said it all. *Impending fucking doom alert*, Harry’s obnoxious internal monologue squealed, as those dark eyes skimmed over Harry’s form like he was the most insignificant *boy* who lived.

Tom Riddle was leaning back in his chair, his chin resting on a fist. The sleeves of his button-up shirt had been rolled up, revealing thick upper-arms that slimmed into powerful forearms. He had loosened his tie at some point, unbuttoning the first two buttons to reveal collarbones corded with thick muscle...

Thick. Powerful. Everything about this man screamed dominance, from his broad shoulders to his ridiculous height. The sharp planes of his face were hollowed out, highlighting his high cheekbones and thin, sharp nose. As shadows fell across his features, Riddle began to give off serial killer vibes.

Hot serial killer vibes, Harry adjusted with a sulk. He’d give Riddle that much.

And with the way Riddle continued to stare at him in a brooding silence, remaining absolutely still, those serial killer vibes were only growing more and more prominent.

Silences like these weren’t exactly uncommon. Riddle was a man of few words... perhaps a man who hated wasting words on his inferiors.

But then, finally, his boss *moved*.

A palm was stretched in Harry’s direction, and the message was quite clear.

Give.

Harry panicked, clutching the papers in his hand a little tighter. *Not ready, not ready... not his best work...*

“Ah, sir—”

“Must I remind you of precisely how precarious your situation is?” Riddle drawled, impatience bleeding through, and Harry couldn’t help but flinch slightly at the weighted, backhanded comment.

He didn’t need another reminder of how he’d gotten this job by mere *luck*, another reminder of

how sorely out of his league Harry was at this company.

A year ago, he'd been waiting outside the recruiter's office to interview for his dream position—Editorial Director of Science Fiction and Fantasy. While Morsmordre mainly published textbooks and other educational materials, its SF & F Department (though limited) was incredibly prestigious. It had published many of Harry's favorite works over the decades... including a certain, beloved fantasy series by J. K. Rowling.

But as soon as he'd seen the other applicants, his *future superiors*, Harry had known he was screwed. Hermione Granger, Pansy Parkinson, Blaise Zabini—all these high-achieving East-Coasters from big-name schools like *Oxford* and *Harvard* had made Harry's lower-than-average GPA from a state university seem like...

Nothing.

And so, at the precise moment when the recruiter—Narcissa Malfoy—had finished skimming and dismissing Harry's resume right in front of his face, a young lady had stormed into her office.

The woman's face had been red with tears, her hair entangled even as she ran her hand through it. And with dark circles bagging underneath her eyes, she'd looked the part of a madwoman.

"I QUIT!" she had screamed. *"HE'S GOING TO KILL ME AT THIS RATE!"*

Harry had looked at her, wide-eyed and horrified. But Narcissa had merely stared at the woman dispassionately, as if this was a normal occurrence.

"Well, then," she'd said briskly. "Goodbye, Myrtle."

Then Narcissa had turned to Harry and added, rather hastily, "Look, Mr. Potter, you're vastly unqualified for the Editorial position you're applying for. How would you like to work as a personal assistant for our Vice President of Product Development, Tom Riddle?"

And that was how Harry, a double major in English and Political Science from the University of Washington, had ended up working for a very high-level company at a rather low-level position.

He had *thought*, naively, that he'd be able to slip in some pieces of his own edited work to his boss. Perhaps attempt to get the 'promotion' Narcissa hadn't been willing to give Harry the first time. But from day one, Riddle had shown zero interest in him... except for his ability to follow orders.

"Black," Riddle said quietly, his eyes skimming over Harry in curiosity.

"Excuse me?" Harry responded, confusion evident in his voice. Riddle continued to look at him quietly, in an evaluative manner, before turning away and responding,

"I like my coffee black."

Those had been Riddle's first words to him.

And that was exactly how their relationship continued to be—with Riddle biting out one-word orders like an *illiterate* caveman, handing out so many that Harry could barely keep his own timetable straight, let alone begin shoving his Editor's portfolio in Riddle's direction.

Pursing his lips, Harry handed in the papers he'd printed last night.

"Sir, I was unable to complete the calculations for estimated trends in Geometry textbooks—"

“Why?”

Dark eyes pierced Harry on the spot, cold and unsympathetic.

Because I'm not a mathematics or economics major, Harry wanted to scream. Because quite honestly, the things you demand of your personal assistant are a bit insane.

“Because I don’t know how to,” he said simply, instead.

Mr. Riddle was unappeased. “You don’t know... *how to?*” His voice had dropped dangerously. “We have free *Wi-Fi* access for employees at this office and you’re saying you couldn’t look it up and figure it out?” His jaw ticked. “Just how *incompetent* are you?”

Harry flinched, snatching back the papers. “I’m sorry, sir. I’ll do it right away.” Yes, Harry would re-teach himself fucking *Multivariable Calculus* if it meant finishing this goddamn assignment.

“Is there anything else I’ll need to complete before I leave for the weekend?” Harry asked as he turned around, his hand reaching for the door knob—

“Leave?” Riddle asked, sadistic amusement evident in his tone.

Harry stilled, his hand freezing on the door knob as he closed his eyes in defeat.

No fucking way.

“Yeah. Tomorrow's *Saturday*, ” he said, his voice smaller than ever as he turned to face his boss.

Riddle smiled liplessly, displaying his sharp canines. “Whether or not you get the weekend off depends on the quality of your work.” His eyes flashed. “At this point, only *perfection* will save you from dire consequences.”

So in other words, Harry was *fucked*.

But Riddle wasn’t finished with him. He tilted his head sideways in contemplation, his eyes narrowing on Harry’s mouth. “And some manners would do you good as well.”

Harry’s eyebrows furrowed in confusion as Riddle... continued to stare at his mouth?

No, Harry realized with amusement, at the *offending object* in his mouth. He sucked on breakfast lollipops so often he forgot they were in his mouth; he’d merely forgotten to remove it before meeting Riddle.

Harry smirked, removing the lollipop in his mouth at a leisurely enough pace that Riddle’s jaw pulsed once more. *Ah, the small pleasures in life.*

“Better?” Harry asked, the slightest tinge of sarcasm present in his otherwise deferential tone.

Instead of replying, Riddle *pounced*.

“Sucking on lollipops in front of your superiors. Is this what they teach you at American schools?” Riddle sneered, suddenly losing his cool exterior to violent rage. His boss’s rage was unpredictable — striking at the slightest tickle of a feather.

Oh, had Harry mentioned?

Tom Riddle was British.

Harry folded his arms, defiant and defensive all at once. He wasn't about to admit that lollipops were more of a him-thing, really.

He also wasn't about to admit that the American public schooling system was a lot less strict about certain things, like eating in class. From his experiences, anyways.

“Well... among other things. Like chewing gum.” Harry grinned, briefly thinking back to the way his middle school peers had traded gum sticks under desks like they were marijuana. “We do have a famous gum wall in Seattle, if you're ever interested—”

Riddle cut him off with a snort. “Thank you. Please return with the documents completed.”

Harry saluted him back, smirking to himself as the door swung shut behind him.

Unlike Riddle's previous assistants, who'd lasted less than a month... well, there was a reason Harry had lasted a *whole year*. He was practically a Riddle-expert by this point — he could handle him in just about any mood, calming his unpredictable bouts of rage into derisive amusement with a well-phrased remark.

Harry sighed as he reached his cubicle, switching on his laptop as he prepared his workspace.

* * *

Home.

Harry slumped onto the sofa, dropping his backpack unceremoniously on the floor. He pulled out his laptop with one hand, balancing his pad thai take-out against the cushions and the side of his leg.

Finally, Harry thought. A feeling of contentment flooded him as he drummed his fingers against his piece-of-trash Toshiba, waiting for it to log him in. Because by day, he worked as a lowly assistant to the controlling, egotistical Tom Riddle.

But by night? Harry *lived, breathed, and wrote* fanfiction.

He navigated to his Archive of Our Own account, automatically checking for comments and kudos on his latest works. Harry was a pretty respected author on the Ao3 website, and the rush of comments that greeted him when he logged back always made him feel so *incredibly* happy. Like he actually had a *purpose* in life, other than being a mess-up of a personal assistant.

Harry frequently dabbled in various popular fandoms, like Teen Lions and Marvel. But first and foremost, his top fandom would always be *James Evans* — J. K. Rowling's legendary, seven-book series about a young wizard who went to Hogwarts and fought Marvolo Gaunt, an evil wizard who plotted to eradicate muggleborns and achieve world domination.

And of course, Harry's OTP (one true pairing) would always be... *James/Marvolo*.

He'd long since gotten over any feelings of guilt over how messed up the pairing was. Harry *revelled* in the forbidden, taboo nature of his favorite pairing. The possibilities he could take it in were endless.

He'd gone from writing James/Marvolo fanfiction within the *James Evans* Wizarding World... to writing the pairing with Alternate Universe tropes: No Magic, Coffee Shop AU, etc.

For instance, Harry was currently writing an *Office AU* for his OTP... in which James was the poor, overworked assistant and Marvolo was his wicked boss.

He bit his lip in amusement, twiddling the fork in his hand. It probably *was* hitting a bit too close to home... Harry had been drawing on many of his personal office experiences, lately, to craft every experience as authentically as possible.

But if the interactions between the main pair were influenced by real life events and a certain someone... well, who was going to know?

With a sly, guiltless smile, Harry opened up a fresh Google Drive document and began writing the next chapter... when he was interrupted.

Buzz. Buzz.

It was his Jarvolo discord.

>> **HotDiggoryDog:** Holy fucking shit can't believe Lord_Voldemort_ ended it like that.

Harry grinned, knowing exactly what Diggory was referring to.

His favorite Ao3 author of all time, Lord_Voldemort_, had recently published the final chapter of *Haunted*. And everyone was going *nuts*.

>> **GingerGorl:** WTF. He actually *killed off James AND Marvolo in the end*. Nobody fucking *won*.

>> **LavenderBrown:** What the... I can't wrap my MIND around this...

Harry chuckled softly, shifting his position on the sofa so that he was lying on his stomach, head supported by his elbows.

He remained quiet, happy to sit and watch the reactions of his friends. For his part, he couldn't say he was exactly *surprised*. Having read every single one of Lord_Voldemort_'s works thrice over, Harry had a decent grasp on the way the author's mind worked by now. Killing off main characters was no issue for Voldemort.

There was no way of sugar-coating it—Harry was *obsessed* with Voldemort's writing. He couldn't help it. His favorite author wrote horror so naturally, so *beautifully* and heart-clenchingly realistically.

Voldemort never strayed far from the genres of horror and psychological thriller. His stories were usually gen as well—focusing on Marvolo's upbringing in the orphanage. Powerful coming-of-age works about how Gaunt grew up to become the villain he was in canon.

Voldemort wrote so *impeccably* that Harry tended to sympathize with Marvolo by the end of each fic. And every time he fell for Voldemort's characters, his respect for the author grew more and more—

Well, enough fanboying.

Harry plugged into his music and re-opened his blank sheet. *Chapter 8*, he titled it.

Put your head on my shoulder...

With Paul Anka crooning pure romance into his ears, Harry let the words flow from his fingers... typing faster than he could collect his own thoughts...

Whisper in my ear... baby...

* * *

Harry yawned once more, rubbing his tired eyes as he finished typing the last sentence of his report.

He leaned back in his swiveling chair, rolling his shoulders. He craned his neck in the direction of his neighboring cubicles, frowning at the emptiness that greeted him.

Everyone... Hermione, Pansy, Blaise... had already left for the weekend. But had Mr. Riddle allowed his own poor assistant, Harry Potter, to leave?

Nope, Harry thought viciously. Because Riddle was the Devil in disguise, a man who held grudges longer than his own lifespan and found a *sadistic pleasure* in torturing Harry in every way possible... which included making him stay in on Saturdays.

One *saucy* come-back, a hint of sarcasm... and Riddle had Harry paying for it.

Harry sighed as he began printing his report, logging into his email to kill time.

That was why, during lunch break, Harry was scrolling through his email, bored out of his mind, when he got a notification. And not just any notification—one from Ao3, regarding his most-favorite-of-all-time author in the world.

Lord_Voldemort_ had published... a new fanfiction? Harry clicked furiously at his keyboard, navigating to the work.

His jaw dropped as he read the tags. No *horror* or *psychological torture* in sight—it had been replaced by tags like *fluff*. And *romance*. And the main shipping was James/Marvolo.

Romance. Voldemort was writing romance. Harry didn't know whether to cry or faint. Because this author was Harry's favorite horror writer of all time—but from the way he wrote fanfiction to the way he replied to comments, he didn't seem to have a romantic, sympathetic bone in his body.

Then again, this was *Lord_Voldemort_*. Anything by him was bound to be good.

Glancing sideways at the cubicles around him one last time, Harry drummed his fingers and stuck his usual breakfast lollipop back in his mouth. Reading at office was never a good idea. But when it came to Voldemort, he could never resist.

He clicked on the first chapter, thrumming with anticipation.

This was going to be an experience.

Harry leaned forward in his seat, a secret smile slowly whispering across his mouth.

Lord_Voldemort_ was writing an *Office AU*. Just like Harry.

The plot was already amazing, and the main character was as masculine and powerful as Voldemort always seemed to write him. He was a successful Vice President, at a *publishing company*.

Harry couldn't help but snigger at the irony. God, this seemed weirdly similar to his own current fanfiction. Except that, of course, Voldemort was writing from *Marvolo's* perspective...

Most Jarvolo authors—Harry included—tended to write from James's perspective. Simply because it made more *sense*: James was the protagonist in canon, his voice was familiar and almost comforting.

But Voldemort always wrote from Marvolo's perspective... perhaps because his writing style and author's voice was more *suited* for Marvolo. *Perfect* for it, in fact.

And a fluffy, romance fanfiction would be no exception that rule, it seemed.

Harry's eyes widened as he reached the part where James was being introduced.

... Green eyes sparkled madly behind spectacles as the man sucked the pink, baseball-shaped lollipop out of his mouth. "Yes, Gaunt?" the man intoned, rudely and impatiently, unaware of the shamelessly appealing picture he'd been painting a moment earlier.

"Sir," Marvolo corrected, and the green-eyed man had the audacity to smirk.

"No need to call me 'sir,' Gaunt."

Harry's mouth fell open, choking and releasing the lollipop in his mouth.

Wh-what?

His breath left him in one go as Harry leaned back in his chair, mouth gaping in an undoubtedly unattractive fashion. His mind swirled as he processed the very first interaction between the main pairing... Voldemort's very first, *non-platonic* written interaction.

Damn. Voldemort really made *James* seem like a prat in this one.

Harry sat back up, twiddling a pen in his hand.

How... *original*.

Intrigued beyond measure, Harry leaned forward and continued reading the fanfiction. And by *god*, how could he have ever doubted Voldemort's ability to write romance? Well... perhaps not *romance*... but *sexual tension*, hot and steamy and stomach-twistingly *good*, seemed to waft off of his work desktop in heady waves.

Voldemort was a fucking *god*.

His words dripped lust, making Harry's mouth water and his head dizzier than ever. Every glance

between characters felt like a burning gaze upon himself... every touch between the pairing grazed him as well.

How could a writer have such a way with words? To be able to chill Harry to the bone in one fic, and make him shudder with warm gooeyness in another?

One thing was certain. If this was how Voldemort continued to write, future chapters of this would *not* be safe for work.

Harry continued to read anyway. He remained unaware as people filed back in after the lunch break had ended. He was so absorbed in the gorgeous, magnetic interactions of his OTP, his breath hitching at every second moment until...

He reached the cliffhanger at the end.

Harry suppressed a groan, still fixated on the last words of the protagonist.

Of course, there was a cliffhanger. Voldemort never failed to leave horrible cliffhangers *on purpose*.

“How else will I keep you ensnared?” he’d once stated at the end of an update, one of his few interactions with his fans.

Harry immediately began scrolling through the comments. Not that Voldemort ever replied. In fact, he rarely addressed any of the comments at the beginnings of each chapter, always preferring to “leave his readers in mystery.”

He shook his head fondly—Harry had never been able to resist responding to comments on his own fics, no matter how many he got these days.

Still. None of these habits seemed to detract from Voldemort’s fame and success on Ao3. Let alone Roaring’s — *Voldemort’s* own following was incredible. His most avid readers and fans called him, “My Lord” out of some mutual-founded respect. And somehow, they all seemed to know each other... intimately...

Harry’s eyes stuttered on an interesting chain of comments.

>> **Ferret-Face:** Still can’t believe you’re writing romance! Still wondering if there were any... real-life influences on this decision? xD

>> **Bellabitch:** How dare you suggest such a thing! Our Lord is way too hot and unattainable.

>> **Ummmm:** uh hot? How do you know?

>> **Luscious_M:** If you must know, newbie, Lord_Voldemort has a private, *exclusive* discord for his most loyal fans.

Harry stopped reading. He may have even stopped *breathing*.

A discord?

An exclusive discord? Where Voldemort showed his face and spoke to fans?

Harry’s mind raced, his heart palpitating in excitement. He *had* to get on there. By any means possible—

“What are you *reading*?” a low, sharp voice spoke from behind him, and Harry’s heart jumped out of his chest, knowing precisely who was behind him.

He switched the Ao3 tab to his email and swiveled around. But it was no use. Riddle had already seen exactly what Harry had been up to, during work hours, when he was supposed to be printing, proofreading...

Harry cursed internally, teeth gritting. *Why had Riddle chosen now, of all times, to ‘check up’ on him?*

Riddle towered above him, his handsome face contorted in an expression of pure incredulity.

“Was that...”

Harry’s eyes widened.

Don’t say it, don’t say it, don’t say it, he chanted in his mind, pleading.

“... fanfiction?”

The office fell to a dead silence.

The heads that had remained in the mostly-barren office on this Saturday swiveled in Harry’s direction. Whispers and mutters floated through the air, gossip traveling faster than the speed of light.

Harry buried his head in his hands, face burning. A million thoughts and emotions fleeting through him.

Fuck shit no crap no fuc—

“No,” Harry lied unconvincingly, his voice broken and dead and monotone. Because this was literally his worst nightmare coming to life.

He looked up at Riddle, only to find the man, *predictably*, staring at him in silence... stone-faced, emotionless.

“*No!*” Harry said again, sharply, almost *vehemently*, and then he tried to laugh it off awkwardly. But nothing was working, nothing was making this situation go away because nothing *ever seemed to go his way—*

He gestured wildly to his screen. “That was just... a little manuscript, personal writing project I’ve been working on...” Harry trailed off, face burning hotter than ever. He’d never been a good liar.

Please, let me die already.

But of course, the situation had to get worse. Riddle was now staring intently at the Internet tab Harry had just switched from, his eyes narrowing as he read the tab's title...

Riddle’s expression shifted completely.

It was one Harry had never seen on his face before. His eyebrows shot up, his dark eyes were wider than ever—burning with curiosity. His jaw had dropped slightly, his lips glistening as if he’d just licked them.

And then the most curious thing of all happened.

Riddle *blushed*.

A distinct redness flooded the high cheekbones of Mr. Riddle, the epitome of manliness and dominance, and Harry couldn't stop *staring* in wonder, *wondering* how such a phenomenon had possibly *happened* —

“Then why is that browser tab titled, ‘*Lord Voldemort*’ ?” Riddle asked, his face cleared of any redness within mere seconds—so fast, Harry could have sworn he'd imagined it.

As for the man's *voice*, it was thicker than usual.

As if... Riddle was *mortified*.

But why? Harry wondered, momentarily distracted from his own plight. Because this situation was already horrifyingly surreal enough without his *boss* turning into some blushing mai—

“*Answer me*,” Riddle commanded in a colder, firmer voice, his face once again wiped of all emotion and, oh *yes*, he was back to being the unemotional, unforgiving, Greek-sculpted devil of Harry's nightmares and daily existence—

Answer me.

Why is that browser tab titled, ‘Lord Voldemort’?

Because he's my favorite author on Ao3—

Because I was just reading his recent work, ‘Green-Eyed Monster’ — which I strongly recommend by the way —

Harry couldn't say any of these. He'd already put his foot in his mouth and stated that it was *his* manuscript, his *personal writing project*, in the first place.

So instead, he opted to lean back in his chair and lie out of his ass.

“Well, that's my pen name. On the website where I write.” Harry shrugged and nodded his head, as if those actions alone confirmed the authenticity of his words.

In an instant, the atmosphere seemed to change.

Riddle's eyebrows furrowed, his mouth twisting indecipherably. His eyes narrowed and darkened in a heady mixture of amusement and fury. And although Harry couldn't understand *why* it had taken Riddle so long to get mad at him, he didn't understand why his supposed ‘*pen name*’ was what *really* drove his boss off the deep end, as opposed to the fact that Harry had been blatantly slacking off...

“Is that so... *Lord Voldemort* ?” Riddle asked, his tone dark and dangerous and tinged with heavy sarcasm.

Harry felt a very ominous tug in his stomach.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Beta-read by Aria <333

“Is that so... Lord Voldemort?” Riddle asked, his tone dark and dangerous and tinged with heavy sarcasm.

Harry felt a very ominous tug in his stomach.

Dark eyes gleamed knowingly down at Harry, as if drilling into his soul. But he held Riddle’s gaze, willing him to believe the lie. He was still seated in his swivel chair, his work desk behind him as he faced his boss.

Harry was well aware of the office’s emptiness. The few who had come in to work over the weekend had quickly packed up and hurried off once Riddle exited the confines of his own office, unwilling to chance facing the wrath of the Vice President.

Cowards, he thought, before facing his boss once more. Yet, with everyone gone, the lack of an unwanted audience sparked something in Harry.

A desire to *rebel*.

But before Harry could reply, Riddle was suddenly stalking forward and leaning down *over* him... looking over Harry’s shoulder as he reached towards the abandoned desktop computer with his right hand. His left arm came down to rest on the desk behind Harry’s chair, his head nearly tucking into the crook between Harry’s head and shoulder.

Harry froze.

Shock and adrenaline rushed through his limbs. His mind went on overdrive, because Riddle had trapped him against the desk, and those exposed collarbones were inches away from Harry’s nose and he was *too close too close too close*—

Then Riddle shifted slightly closer, the muscles in his arms and shoulders rippling as they brushed against Harry’s. He breathed a whiff of the older man’s cologne. Fresh and citrusy and so *crisp* , just like the way Riddle enunciated his *bloody* ‘t’s.

“Potter,” Riddle breathed lowly, dangerously into his ear, his British accent more pronounced than ever.

And suddenly, uninvited heat was licking down his spine, pooling in his stomach. Harry shuddered back into his seat, his hands clenching the armrests of his chair so tightly they turned pale. He could hear nothing but the rushing of his own blood, no longer aware of the furious clicks and taps dealt to his work desktop.

Riddle turned his head towards Harry’s right ear, his sharp, clenching jaw suddenly visible from Harry’s peripheral vision.

“Such *lies*, ” Riddle spat, his mouth barely grazing the tip of Harry’s ear. Harry swallowed dryly, biting his bottom lip.

The older man leaned back a few inches to face Harry directly, eyes spitting fire.

“I *despise* liars—nearly as much as I despise slackers, if not more—”

And then Riddle paused upon truly seeing him, cutting himself off.

His features grew blank.

Dark eyes lingered on Harry’s flushed cheeks and raw-bitten lower lip before roaming down his figure. And for a second, they seemed to darken, flashing with a different sort of heat altogether—

Harry finally found the strength to place a firm hand against Riddle’s chest and shove him back.

“Wh-what the fuck, Riddle,” Harry gasped, and even though his voice was embarrassingly husky and his words were horribly unprofessional, he couldn’t stop the stream of unconsciousness flowing from his tongue. “What the fuck *what the fuck*, no concept of personal fucking space or *privacy*—”

“Do you think,” Riddle began, his tone quiet and ominous, “that you deserve any?” He stood to his full height, looming above Harry like a thunderous cloud. “After such a *fine* display of work ethic?” His voice grew even quieter as he muttered, “Fanfiction. Reading *fanfiction* when the stakes are so...”

What... stakes...?

Harry could barely focus on what the other man was saying as he stepped closer, his hand grasping Harry’s chin and roughly jerking it upwards.

“Answer me , ” Riddle uttered imperiously, his voice filled with such an overpowering sense of *command* that Harry had no choice but to look back.

“No,” Harry replied simply, candidly. He clenched his jaw, fighting the urge to say, ‘ *but—*’

Riddle’s grip tightened on his jaw once more, as if reading his mind.

When he remained quiet, Riddle smiled approvingly at him.

Good boy, Harry thought hysterically.

And then, disgusted by his own thoughts, he ripped himself out of Riddle’s grip.

“You— *motherfucking—* ” Harry spluttered, and Riddle tensed with fury. “You can’t just, physically *assault* people like tha—”

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Harry froze instantly at the sound as Riddle leaned back, his hand slipping from Harry’s jaw and going to the vibrating Apple watch on his left wrist.

Riddle’s features seemed to revert back to their usual stoniness as he clicked the alarm off. His jaw ticked as he continued to stare at his watch, otherwise expressionless.

Then, moments later—

Ring! Ring!

Harry craned back to where his own phone had begun to ring, jarringly loud as its sound echoed over the wooden desk.

Quickly grabbing it, he swiped at his screen without a second thought, his eyes barely managing to catch the words labelling his alarm—

Oh crap.

There was a sinking feeling in Harry's stomach as he slowly looked back up at his boss, suddenly very much aware of the reason he'd come to check on Harry.

Morsmordre's board meeting was happening tomorrow, Sunday afternoon, and he was supposed to have finished the trend analysis report and given it to Riddle way in advance.

But instead, Harry had been reading fanfiction, completely unaware of just how important this report was, or how important the meeting Riddle needed it for was, despite having marked the date on his own calendar *months ago*—

"Mr. Riddle, sir," Harry started apologetically, pleadingly. *God, he was an idiot.*

Riddle remained quiet and emotionless, locks of hair falling over his eyes as he continued to stare at the events on his watch.

"Mr. Ridd—"

"I had thought that *surely*, " he began imperiously, "even the most scatterbrained assistant would not need to be reminded of the importance of this meeting."

Riddle looked up, his eyes glinting unreadably.

"And despite your shortcomings, I had maintained confidence in your ability to perform when the stakes are high."

Harry bit his lip, silently agreeing with the statement even as guilt settled in his stomach. For some reason, he'd always been able to pull off an excellent report in the nick of time... whether it was a product of luck or a few strokes of brilliance.

It was part of why he'd stuck around for so long. Hell, his colleagues had even even begun calling him the 'Boy-Who-Lived' due to his reputation for having stayed on as Riddle's assistant for so long.

But now...

Riddle stared at him impassively, icy coldness wiping away the fury that had dominated his movements a mere minute earlier.

"If I had any sense, I would fire you this instant."

Harry flinched at the statement, his hand pulsing around his phone in a rhythm that matched his internal monologue. *Stupid... Stupid... Stupid...*

He looked up tentatively at his boss, his eyes wide and pleading. Harry hadn't realized how much

he needed this job until the very realistic possibility of losing it had popped up. Riddle paid him so well, and however shameful it was to admit, his previous salary as Chief Editor for *The Quibbler* had *nothing* on his salary as Riddle's personal assistant—

Eventually, Riddle exhaled harshly, his eyebrows furrowing as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Just leave. And finish that report.”

Harry scrambled to his feet, grabbing his backpack.

“Of course, sir, thank yo—”

“Don't.” Riddle grabbed Harry's wrists, the jolting motion stopping him in his tracks.

He leaned in close to Harry's ear, his cologne washing over Harry in heady, mind-dizzying waves that nearly made him forget everything that had occurred over the past few minutes.

“Don't mistake this for forgiveness. I *will* find a way to punish you for this.”

He released Harry's wrists. “I will see you in my office at six o'clock sharp tomorrow morning with the completed report.”

And with that, Riddle turned sharply on his heel and left Harry's cubicle. His slow, sure footsteps clicked over the hospital-white, linoleum floors, so at odds with Harry's racing heart.

* * *

Tom slammed the door to his office behind him, his hand clenching tightly around the door knob as he hissed through gritted teeth.

He *really* should have fired Harry Potter this time. In all honesty, Tom had left his office with the intention of doing so, had his assistant not finished the report.

But then he'd witnessed something so utterly shocking.

His personal assistant had been reading fanfiction. *Lord_Voldemort_'s* fanfiction.

He'd had bigger concerns on his mind... multibillion-dollar deals and a certain, upcoming board meeting. And yet, Tom was instantly distracted by this sliver of impossibility, unable to restrain himself from rushing forward and ravaging the boy's laptop. He had searched for the boy's Ao3 username until realizing, with disappointment, that Potter hadn't logged into his account on the work computer. Even if he did happen to have an account in the first place.

It was bad enough that *anyone* related to his professional life was reading his fanfiction. Under no circumstances would Tom allow his professional and personal life to mix. Even if Tom *was* quite proud of the name he'd made for himself in the fanfiction world.

But the fact that, of all people, it was *Harry Potter* who had been reading it...

Tom slammed his head back into the door, exhaling a low, breathy, slightly hysterical chuckle.

His little *green-eyed monster* would be the end of him.

He'd already plagued and infected Tom's sense of creativity.

Every time Tom sat down to write after finishing his previous work, pondering the plot and theme of his next work, all he could think of was *Potter*... rushing into Tom's office every morning, perpetually flushed.

Those turbulent locks, curling around his pale ears as he held out coffee to Tom. The way he licked his lips nervously, the slightest hint of sarcasm in his voice as he spoke, "Black as always, Mr. Riddle."

And when Potter wasn't licking his lips, or biting them nervously... he was sucking on those horrid lollipops, day in and day out, their glossy reddish-pink color bleeding out his mouth and painting his lips a maddeningly appealing blood red—

No.

Tom slammed his fist against his desk, punctuating the sentiment. Fury licked up his spine at how *weak* the boy had made him... how easily the boy made him *feel* emotions he'd so long ago resolved to pour only into *fiction*.

It made no sense. Harry Potter was so un-special, so extraordinarily unexceptional. He was probably the most under-qualified worker at this entire office.

To think that this boy had become his unwitting *muse* ? It was laughable.

And yet, there was something in him. An unnameable spark—whether of defiance or something else—that boiled Tom's blood every time. But he couldn't put a finger on it... couldn't put a finger on *him*.

He didn't know what to make of Harry Potter.

And that made him a *threat*. In fact—now, more than ever, Potter was a liability.

At least, from his earlier reaction, it seemed likely that Potter didn't know Tom was Lord_Voldemort_.

He scoffed at the brief reminder of his assistant's inane attempt to claim *he* was Lord_Voldemort_.

Tom was confident that he would be capable of keeping Potter's mouth shut if the time came. But what if the boy had unwittingly leaked details about him? Or what if anyone else happened to have found or leaked hints about his identity?

He knew that his true identity was a source of talk amongst Jarvolo fans. But he'd never once considered the possibility of his identity being discovered. He gave so little information about his past and self that he'd never worried about covering his tracks.

But he couldn't take any chances. Once they pieced together that Lord Voldemort was Tom Riddle, all would be lost.

... There was only way to check.

Tom sat at his desk and powered on his laptop. And then he did something he hadn't done for years—he logged into the Jarvolo Discord he'd joined back when his username had been

completely different, back when he'd been a completely different person altogether.

23 New Mentions of: Slytherin's_Heir_

Tom ignored them. He wasn't interested in viewing any personal messages or notifications from his older days. He was only curious to see if there had been any recent mentions of Lord_Voldemort_...

He typed his fanfiction username into the search bar, after which Discord immediately pulled up the most recent conversation mentioning him. His eyebrows rose as he read the date—the discussion had only occurred two weeks ago.

Tom clicked on it and proceeded to read the whole snippet.

>> **SeanTheSheep:** Thoughts on Lord_Voldemort_? Be honest.

>> **MickeyCorner:** I bet Voldie's a real asshole IRL

He paused, frowning. The curse word didn't bother him much, but *really*? 'Voldie'?

The disrespectful little *brat*.

>> **MickeyCorner:** He doesn't have an updating schedule and he always posts so erratically. I mean, he made us wait *two years* one time. Remember when we all thought *The Orphan* was abandoned?

>> **ChoAegyo:** ...

>> **Gred:** *oh man*

>> **Forge:** ... HAHAAH THE ORPHAN??? WAS ABANDONED??? Mikey I'm almost *impressed*

>> **Gred:** Right when you don't think he has a sense of humor, he pulls something like this xD

Why was Tom reading this again? These imbeciles made him want to rip out his hair and go bald.

He continued reading anyway, curiosity getting the better of him.

>> **AngelinaBallerina:** Oh shut up boys. @MickeyCorner don't you think that's a little harsh? Some writers DO have a life outside of fanfiction :/

>> **RoonilWazlib:** Mickey has a point though. He never gives a reason for updating late and he *never* responds to comments—even those long-ass essays @lightning_boi always posts

Tom paused. The name 'lightning_boi' did seem to ring a bell...

>> **HeadGirl:** I agree. I think Voldemort has a superiority complex. I've read all of his works obsessively, analyzing them vigorously... perhaps not as well as lightning_boi but—

>> **RoonilWazlib:** lecture time

>> **HeadGirl:** As you know, Voldemort grew so famous within the *James Evans* fandom world because of how *well* he writes Marvolo... even better, arguably, than J. K. Rowling herself. And the fact that he's able to write such a convincing *raging psychopath*... I wouldn't be surprised if

it's because, well, you know...

>> **AngelinaBallerina:** You think he's mentally... off himself?

>> **HeadGirl:** I think he's definitely mentally *something*. I just can't quite figure him out. But I will, soon! He's a very fascinating person and I'm quite the fan of his work, even if he is deranged :)

He narrowed his eyes. This *HeadGirl*... she was dangerous. Not to mention, very irritating and *very* wrong.

>> **RoonilWazlib:** @HeadGirl... know that I say this out of the goodness of my heart... but I *really* think you should change your name

>> **SeanTheSheep:** Yeah it's really suggestive

>> **RoonilWazlib:** wtf sean I was approaching the situation DELICATELY

>> **AngelinaBallerina:** delicately my ass

>> **HeadGirl:** Oh fuck off. I'll call myself whatever I like, perverts be damned.

Nonsense... *nonsense*... Tom scrolled down a bit further.

>> **TheWrongBoy:** Uh oh. Wait @RoonilWazlib—why'd you tag lightning_boi earlier?

>> **RoonilWazlib:** HUH? I DID?

>> **TheWrongBoy:** Yeah, when you mentioned his “long-ass comments” on Voldemort's works

>> **RoonilWazlib:** Oh shit

>> **SpinnetToWinIt:** Ahhhh boiiii go change it! If our lightning man sees that part of the chat he's gonna murder us

>> **HeadGirl:** You know how defensive he gets about Voldemort!

>> **lightning_boi:** ... defensive?

Tom leaned in closer to the screen, a smile creeping at the corners of his mouth. This was getting interesting.

>> **PossiblyRelatedToMichaelJordan:** shit's about to get reeeeeeeal

>> **AngelinaBallerina:** Not helping lee

>> **PossiblyRelatedToMichaelJordan:** what can I say? I love commentating ;)

>> **SpinnetToWinIt:** Jeezus lee your name's so obnoxiously long

>> **PossiblyRelatedToMichaelJordan:** All part of the charm ladies

>> **HeadGirl:** ... lightning_boi? Are you there? Why aren't you saying anything?

>> **lightning_boi:** I was reading the section of conversation I was tagged in.

>> **PossiblyRelatedToMichaelJordan:** ooohhh shit, he brought out the PERIOD!! Bringing out that PUNCTUATION! He mad

>> **RoonilWazlib:** lightning... my man... my *best* man, at my future wedding...

>> **lightning_boi:** @MickeyCorner. I find it pretty *ironic* that you called Lord_Voldemort_ an asshole.

>> **MickeyCorner:** hey whats that supposed to mean

>> **lightning_boi:** Nothing two brain cells can't solve.

Tom smirked. His little *savior* had such a delightfully sharp tongue... and nice grammar to accompany it.

>> **HeadGirl:** lightning...

>> **lightning_boi:** "mentally something?" "deranged?" "superiority complex?"

>> **HeadGirl:** Now just wait

>> **lightning_boi:** Though be honest, I wouldn't blame Voldemort if he had a superiority complex. He IS superior to all of us.

>> **HeadGirl:** excuse me?

>> **lightning_boi:** Yes, even you, Mione. "Deranged?" No. You have it wrong. He's a *genius*. A complete and utter genius. His works are filled with plot twists that only lead to bigger ones, and every plot point is so meaningful and well-thought out. No one can craft plots the way Lord_Voldemort_ does.

>> **RoonilWazlib:** Mione? Wait a sec... @HeadGirl is that your real name?

>> **lightning_boi:** Think what you will of his personality! But Lord_Voldemort_ isn't just the most incredible author on Ao3. He's a mastermind. His way with words is unparalleled, and there is no doubt in my mind that he is destined for greatness... if he hasn't reached that point already.

>> **lightning_boi:** Every piece of writing by Lord_Voldemort_ builds upon his legacy, immortalizing him.

>> **lightning_boi:** Lord_Voldemort_... is a *god*.

The conversation seemed to end there, timing out and starting again with a new topic hours later. But even if it hadn't ended, Tom wouldn't have been able to read further.

His eyes were stagnated on the paragraph from lightning_boi, reading it over and over until it was ingrained in his mind.

Tom was a selfish author. He wrote only for himself and deigned to post his work for others to read and enjoy. He rarely read comments, let alone responded to them. In fact, the few comments he'd read towards the beginning of his fanfiction career, '*updaaate*' and '*I want moreee*' and '*good story dude*,' had only incensed him.

But lightning_boi's words of praise were magnificent. Worshipful. Eloquent and evocative.

Tom dragged his cursor over lightning_boi's name, but the only information available about him was his gender. *Male*.

Not nearly enough information.

His little lawyer had mentioned Ao3, hadn't he?

Tom pulled up the Archive Of Our Own website, searching for lightning_boi's profile.

Yesss...

He found lightning_boi's Ao3 account quite easily and promptly scrolled through it, absorbing it. His most recent work had a shockingly high amount of bookmarks and kudos, more than any of lightning_boi's other works.

But...

The title of the work was *boss from hell*. Not a capital letter in sight, Tom noted with displeasure, so unlike the way lightning_boi had talked on the Discord. Anything less than perfect grammar usually put him off.

But it was an *Office AU*. Interesting... Tom narrowed his eyes competitively, eager to see how his *fan's* Office AU compared to his own.

So he clicked on the work anyways, skipping past the summary and introduction to read the beginning of the first chapter.

I had no clue what I was getting myself into when I accepted the position of "personal assistant" instead of my dream job. But after meeting him for the first time time, one thing was certain—

Nnhgh. Tom grimaced, nearly exiting out of the work right there and then.

He hated first-person. It was too flawed, too personal, and he almost *never* related with the protagonist enough to enjoy their perspective.

But as his mouse hovered above the red X at the corner of the tab, snippets of lightning_boi's impassioned and strangely touching words from the Jarvolo discord came floating back to him, unbidden.

He's a mastermind...

Destined for greatness...

Lord_Voldemort... is a god.

Tom closed his eyes for a moment, allowing the glorious praise to wash over him again and again, like a rising tide underneath the moon's influence.

And then, once more, he began to read.

... one thing was certain—I had a boss from hell...

Tom was drawn into the story, falling deeper and deeper into lightning_boi's world with every sentence. He barely noticed when the sun set, when darkness fell upon the towering skyscrapers

outside of his top-floor office.

The words floating on the screen before him were all that existed.

* * *

Harry yawned as he slipped under the covers, tapping at his phone to check the time.

Two hours past midnight. He groaned, tossing an arm over his eyes and forehead as he plopped down on the mattress.

The report had taken him forever. And Harry still wasn't quite sure he'd gotten everything correct—he was planning on getting to the office around five o'clock to check over his work with a colleague (*someone* would be there, surely) and print out the report.

Harry's eyes were just beginning to droop when his phone buzzed with a notification.

His hand twitched against his will.

No. Don't do this.

You have to wake up in two hou—

His phone buzzed again, and this time, Harry reached for the plugged-in phone at his bedside table.

It had just been his email, he sighed, opening up the app to check anyways.

Subject: [Ao3] Comment on *boss from hell*

His eyebrows raised in delighted surprise. At least it was *Ao3* email.

Harry clicked on it and read.

He shot up in bed, wide awake. *No freaking way.* His left hand came up to clutch at the material of his own shirt over his chest, his whole body buzzing with uncontainable energy.

The message itself was nothing extraordinary. It almost clinical-sounding. It could have been commented by someone who'd never even read the work.

But the name above the comment—the reader who'd left the comment—was what got Harry's heart pounding furiously, his mind racing crazily.

>> Lord_Voldemort_: Kudosed, Bookmarked, Subscribed.

Harry screamed into his pillow.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry for the late post! I re-wrote this chapter three times while trying to do a bunch of research on how Board meetings and stuff with higher-up executives work to make this as accurate as possible (still not sure I succeeded). Also, I took a break to experiment with fanart, so that was fun.

On the bright side, this is the *longest* chapter I've ever written at 8.6 K words (longer than what the entire fic had been so far lol). So, enjoy!

Beta-read by the lovely Ava/Luxis—an actual goddess.<3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: *Kudosed, Bookmarked, Subscribed.*

Harry screamed into his pillow.

Needless to say, Harry got very little sleep that night.

He replied to Lord_Voldemort_'s comment in a daze, a stream of consciousness flowing from his fingertips as they flew across his phone screen.

When he'd finally finished typing out his comment, Harry fell back against his bed, gripping his phone to his pounding chest.

Kudosed. Bookmarked. Subscribed.

The clinical-sounding but powerful words played over and over in his head, like a catchy tune, making it impossible for him to focus on anything else.

A huff of hysterical amusement left Harry's lips. It was so unlike his favorite author to comment—Lord Voldemort rarely even left author's notes every time he updated. And yet, those three words were so quintessentially Voldemort—unsentimental but dramatic, unembellished yet enigmatic.

To think that they had been written solely for *Harry*... *god*, it was *unreal*...

Smiling helplessly, Harry resigned himself to lying awake on his bed, his mind a chaotic mess of heart-pounding thoughts revolving around those three unspoken words.

* * *

Harry groggily made his way to the parking garage elevator, eyes squinting beneath his glasses as he attempted to see in the dark. As the elevator doors closed, he leaned back against the walls as if attempting to catch one last, fifteen-second nap.

He'd finished his report around midnight, only realize that a lot of it was blatantly incorrect when he'd looked over it in morning. Hermione hadn't been answering the phone—which, given that she was on the other side of the world, was completely understandable.

Thus, the *plan* had been to get to office as early as possible and ask a colleague to help him with his report.

But when he entered the building, there was no one there. It was half past four in the morning and the office was completely dark.

Harry bit his lip, restraining a sudden gust of panic. This was a publishing company. People worked long hours and came in early on the weekends, regularly. There was still a chance that someone would be coming in soon, right?

With nothing better to do but stall until someone came, Harry turned away from the direction of his cubicle and headed straight for the coffee machine. While on his way, he passed by the single lighted door on his floor.

Riddle's office.

Harry paused, staring at the golden placard shimmering across it.

Of course Riddle would be here at ungodly hours in the morning. He was the definition of a workaholic, even by Morsmordre's standards. And more than that—Harry's stomach twisted with guilt once more—he was probably here early because Harry hadn't finished his part of the report.

Even worse, Harry wouldn't be able to finish it... without help.

He wavered near the door, his hand reaching towards the handle... but then just as quickly, Harry came to his senses and jerked it back. He narrowed his eyes before turning on his heel and stalking off towards the coffee machine, his mind made up.

No, he didn't need Riddle. He didn't need *anything* from the man except for some newfound respect when Harry handed in a *perfect* fucking report at six o'clock sharp—

Five minutes later, Harry was steeling himself as he walked towards the sole lighted room, now gripping two filled-up coffee mugs—one to keep himself awake, one to serve as a peace offering.

He set the mugs down and knocked. But it remained silent, completely still.

Was Riddle not here after all? Or perhaps, was he choosing not to answer? Honestly, the latter theory was much more plausible than the first.

Harry scoffed, imagining the possibilities. Maybe his hellishly perfectionistic boss wasn't looking his best at the moment and didn't want people to see him with bags under his eyes or an extra button undone or, heaven forbid, a wayward strand of hair. Riddle always paid an ungodly amount of attention to appearances, both in himself and in those he bossed over.

After all, the first time Harry had come into office less than impeccably dressed, over a year ago, Riddle had dismissed him with cutting remarks.

"An untucked shirt tail? No belt?" Riddle glanced at Harry darkly, his jaw ticking as he walked forward. "I would hate for your poor dressing choices to reflect on me."

His fingers grabbed Harry's stray shirt tail, twisting it until Harry had felt his shirt tightening around his stomach, the constrictive cloth digging into his skin.

"Dismissed. No pay for today."

Riddle leaned in to speak softly, the height difference between them growing more distinct as he imposed his physical presence upon Harry in the most tangible, intimidating way possible.

"Be prepared to hand in your resignation the next time you dress like this."

Harry nearly snorted at the memory. Ah, the usual firing threats. He'd been shit-scared at the time, the inexperienced, newest addition to Morsmordre's Seattle office. But after a year had passed with absolutely nothing changing, Harry was practically desensitized to the constant fear and utter lack of job security.

It was unhealthy, but with the salary Riddle paid him, he just couldn't get himself to find another job.

Harry knocked one last time with a sigh. His hand slid down towards the door knob, resting but not opening. Maybe his boss had simply forgotten to switch off the lights after all.

"Er... it's Harry," he said at last, wincing at the awkward way the words rolled off of his tongue before turning away from the door—

"Come in."

Harry stilled. His hand tightened around the door handle in a mixture of surprise and annoyance. So Riddle *had* been inside.

He entered at once, his earlier vindication withering when he took in his boss's appearance.

Perfect, as usual.

His collar was perfect, his tie was perfect. His hair laid flat and styled in a way Harry could never manage on himself. The suit he'd worn for the Board meeting flattered his form in every way, and Harry found he couldn't look away.

Riddle was leaning an elbow on his desk near his laptop, drawing Harry's gaze to one long, muscled forearm that ended in a fist. And then Harry's eyes trailed upwards, to where that stupidly flawless jaw rested against it, unerringly sharp, just like the rest of him.

Riddle raised an eyebrow, his dark eyes training upon Harry's form with that familiar intensity that always caught him off-guard.

"Come to give me the report, at last?"

Harry stared, unsure of how to answer or where to begin. "Not quite, sir."

Riddle's expression immediately darkened in cold fury, and Harry rushed to correct himself defensively, "You said it was due by six! I just need..."

When Riddle continued to stare at him unforgivingly, Harry trailed off, biting his lip and looking down.

It was so difficult... asking his boss for help.

"I... require assistance." Harry looked up at Riddle through his lashes, still keeping his head turned towards the ground. "I've finished all the write-ups. However, I don't know how to extrapolate the demand for Anthony Buick's Geometry series, and I'm confused on how to calculate its cross-price elasticity with the Geometry series being published by Pearson and McGraw-Hill."

There, that had sounded professional enough.

Riddle raised both of his eyebrows, looking distinctly unimpressed.

"Oh, so you can't draw a simple line graph?" he asked innocently. "Surely you covered demand curves in your Introductory Economics class?"

Harry flushed. Of course, Riddle had to draw out his humiliation, tearing into him one horrible insult at a time.

This was exactly why he hated asking his boss for help.

Harry exhaled, his fingers clasping each other nervously. "It's... been a while, sir."

"*Been a while?*" Riddle echoed monotonically with the slightest hint of disbelief, making Harry's defense sound embarrassingly juvenile. "Please, correct me if I'm wrong," he crossed his fingers and leaned his chin upon them, eyes gleaming knowingly, "but didn't you *major* in Political Science?"

Harry's following silence spoke for him.

It's not like he'd actually *used* his Political Science major in the years after he'd graduated. He'd always taken on *Editing* positions afterwards, and thanks to—

"Truly, your incompetence amazes me." Riddle's eyes narrowed spitefully, even as his cruel mouth curled into a mockery of a smile.

Honestly, what could Harry possibly say to *that* without getting himself fired.

He clenched his jaw in an effort to keep his mouth shut. *Think of your pay. Think of your pay.*

Riddle stared at him with cold, black eyes, belittling him with every second he continued to stare at Harry.

Then he tapped the back of his pen once against the table in front of him, gesturing to the seat facing opposite of his own.

"Sit. Show me your work."

Harry let out a breath and hastily sat down—his first time actually *sitting* in Riddle's office, strangely enough—and scrambled to open his laptop and navigate to the Excel sheet he'd performed the majority of his calculations on.

Riddle closed his own laptop and stood up, walking around the desk to view Harry's screen. Puffs of warm breath swirled near Harry's neck as he leaned down to look over Harry's shoulder, grabbing a pen and a stray sheet of paper.

It turned out, all humiliation aside, that Riddle was an excellent teacher.

"A Joint PPF curve requires..."

Riddle explained concepts in a clear and exact way, never wasting or mincing his words. For someone who rarely spoke to Harry except to toss insults and bark orders at him, Riddle was quite well-spoken.

Harry listened intently, holding onto each word and taking notes furiously.

Riddle was now pointing to a particular column on Harry's Excel sheet.

"You cannot use the midterm formula here — you must divide their percentages, because currency is not universally standardized."

Harry scribbled furiously, attempting to calculate an example. "Oh, so, for instance, would I just multiply the the difference in price and quantity by 100...?"

A warm hand grabbed his own, pausing it. Harry's breath stuttered unconsciously in response.

"No, idiot." Riddle's scoffed barb left another warm puff of breath against his neck, and Harry fought the urge to shiver with indignation. "There is a specific formula you have to use, known as the Price Elasticity of Demand formula..."

Riddle recited a formula that had way more variables than Harry could keep track of. Really, if this was the kind of stuff his boss wasted precious brain space remembering, it was no wonder he couldn't remember something so simple as *personal* fucking *space*.

Harry tensed as Riddle's shoulder brushed against him, more aware of every point at which they touched than the points populating the demand curve in front of him.

"So, applying this formula to all the numbers in row AL and summing them up, the elasticity of demand would be..."

Riddle paused for a few moments before answering. "-4.16."

Harry stared.

No. Way.

Did Riddle just... do that all in his head?

Impossible. There had to be at least fifty numbers in column AL. And the applying the formula to *one* of the numbers was complicated enough.

"... and you want to integrate this curve to compute total profit, which is..." Riddle narrowed his eyes at Harry's screen for a couple of moments, the calculator near them untouched. "\$578,622. Give or take twenty five cents."

Harry's jaw dropped.

He hadn't realized his boss was a *genius*.

And then Riddle did it again. And again. He was faster than Harry's calculator, mostly likely because Harry was slower at plugging and typing numbers, and he was spitting out calculations and completing whole sections of Harry's report when merely *one* section had taken him ages.

He was so inhumanly *fast*, it was insane.

How?

Harry's stomach tightened every time Riddle solved something. It was a strange, heated sensation, and it felt horribly familiar to...

Harry's eyes widened.

What the hell?

For some reason, Harry was getting turned on by how good at *math* Riddle was. Which made no sense. Harry hated math, he sucked at it. He'd majored in *English*, which was very much the opposite of Math.

But somehow, listening to Riddle solve a hard math problem in his *head*, mentally, like it was *nothing*...

It wasn't just the fact that he was intelligent. It was Riddle's *confidence*, the hot gleam in his eyes when he answered, when he spoke the right answer and he knew he was right.

"Again, use the Price Elasticity formula here... the difference of 49,764 and 78,553, divided by their average and multiplied by 100..." Riddle raised an eyebrow, cocky and confident despite his display of utter nerdiness. "It's basic, rudimentary math, really... *nothing* like the Calculus courses I took back in..."

Harry felt a flood of attraction rushing up his spine, hot and sudden and completely uninvited. He clenched his jaw, trying to focus on the words Riddle was saying...

But then Riddle casually said, "...Which equals -8.762," and Harry was *gone*.

And only when Riddle had unwittingly ended up finishing Harry's report ("*I'll just finish it, there's not much left,* ") and moved away did Harry finally breathe again.

Harry cleared his throat. "Right. Thank you so much. I'll just print this—"

Riddle put a hand on his arm, stopping him. Harry tried not to scream in frustration. "Your laptop is connected to my personal printer, yes?"

Harry swallowed. Yes, it was... even though he'd never used it. He'd just really been hoping to catch a *break* from the man for two seconds.

As Harry stood near the printer, waiting for all the documents to print, the silence between them suddenly began to feel very heavy.

He gazed mindlessly at the the trail of papers sliding noisily out of the printer, watching as the completed pile grew larger and larger. The report was quite large, but by no means was it the largest of all the reports Harry had printed for his boss throughout the year...

"Wow, what a waste of paper," Harry remarked as another sheet was pushed onto the pile. Really, one would think a *publishing* company would be mindful of how much paper they used, since the majority of their products *were* paper-based...

Riddle raised an eyebrow.

"Ah, I had forgotten all about your environmentalist tendencies."

Harry bit his lip to restrain himself. "*His*" environmentalist tendencies? What, did Riddle lack them? Did he not care about the environment?

Harry's eyes widened in horror.

Just how conservative was this guy?

Riddle smirked up at him, sitting back in his usual swivel chair. "All about saving the world, aren't you, Harry?"

Harry smiled politely back and hummed in assent, stubbornly keeping his mouth shut lest he bring up something else they might disagree on.

Instead, he looked around the office.

Because the printer was located at the inner corner of Riddle's L-shaped desk, Harry found himself *inside* of Riddle's personal workspace... standing right next to the swivel chair where Riddle was sitting.

In other words, for the first time, Harry was seeing the office from Riddle's perspective.

His boss's desk was as impeccable as ever, oddly bereft of any decor. However, the one picture frame that had always faced away from Harry whenever he entered the room was now turned in his direction.

It wasn't holding a picture, as he'd always suspected it would. Rather, it held a wooden carving with Greek Letters. The first letter was unmistakable an *alpha*, but Harry couldn't read the other two...

Still, *Greek letters*.

Harry stared back at his boss in disbelief.

No way.

"Were you a part of a fraternity in college?"

The words slipped out without any context, any permission of Harry's, and the sharp look Riddle sent him was a stark reminder of the fact that this was none of his business.

But...

Riddle's eyes flickered to the framed Greek letters and dropped in understanding.

"Many years ago... yes."

Harry's eyebrows shot up. *Many years ago?* Just how old was Riddle? He didn't look much older than Harry. Of course, he had to be quite a bit older to have reached such a highly-ranked position in the company. But what Harry was more surprised by was—

Riddle? A frat boy? It just didn't make any sen—

He looked at Riddle.

Okay, so maybe it did, Harry thought as he leaned back in his chair with a scowl. Riddle certainly looked the part, with all of his height and classical attractiveness. He definitely *acted* the part: rich, white boy vibes radiated off of him like he was born into old money.

Riddle was self-entitlement and arrogance rolled up into one, attractive package. He had the kind of

alpha male-confidence that made Harry's nerves bristle in retaliation and shiver with something else entirely, because it was both endlessly irritating and irritatingly... *hot*.

Harry bore venomous holes into Riddle's back, simultaneously cursing his existence while trying not to admire how broad his shoulders looked in a suit.

And, perhaps because he felt the gaze upon him on some unconscious level, Riddle shifted in his seat after a few moments. Keeping his back towards Harry, Riddle stretched an arm bent at the elbow back behind him, biceps flexing and straining his sleeves.

Suddenly, Harry's mouth was drier than ever. All he could think of was how that arm would look without sleeves in the way, and how the movement of his arm was causing the muscles of his shoulder and back to ripple and, oh god, how it would all look without any barrier at all—

Ugh.

No, no, *no*.

Not *here*. Harry thought furiously, desperately. He'd sworn off fantasizing about Riddle at work after what had happened the last time he'd done it.

"What was the name of your fraternity?" Harry asked, scrambling to focus on anything else in front of his boss.

Riddle looked up from the screen his eyes had been glued to, annoyance written clearly across his features. "Not that you would know of it, having gone to college on the other side of the world... but I was a part of *Alpha Omega Alpha*."

Harry choked.

Because, oh *man*, that sounded like the title of some bad, torrid ABO fanfiction. Not like ABO works were bad. If anything, they were a guilty pleasure of his. But *still* ...

He stifled his laughter, but it came out of his nose in weird mixture between a snort and puffed exhale. Then Harry was coughing, laughing, something in between. And, *crap*, Riddle was looking at him like he was crazy but Harry just couldn't stop imagining—

And suddenly, Riddle was looking at Harry in a very different way, a very *knowing* way that had Harry's amusement draining from him in one go.

It was like he knew exactly what was going through Harry's head.

Harry blinked.

That was... simply impossible.

No, *unimaginable*.

Could Riddle possibly...? No, no, no. Riddle? Fanfiction? Ridiculous. The two words didn't even belong in the same sentence.

And yet, Riddle clearly knew what fanfiction was—after all, he'd instantly recognized the Ao3's

icon from the browser tab Harry had switched from yesterday.

Still, on the off-chance that Riddle could read minds (which would actually explain a lot, damn)—surely he would have confronted Harry by now?

“Really, Harry. Omegaverse?” Riddle tilted his head. “How tasteless.”

Harry winced, flushing violently, tortured by his own made-up scenarios of being exposed as the sad trash he was. Once had been enough. Twice? He didn’t think he’d be able to endure it.

There had to be a help manual somewhere. *What to do when your boss finds out you read fanfiction* —

“It’s done,” Riddle said abruptly, cutting off Harry’s frantic flow of panic. At some point during Harry’s minor freak-out, he’d swiveled back around, his back once again facing Harry.

Harry blinked, caught off-guard. *What’s done...?*

In a show of impatience, Riddle rapped the back of his pen against his desk.

Harry straightened up, looking around until his eyes settled back on the printer, which had finally stopped printing.

Right. The report.

It’s done *printing*, Harry completed sarcastically in his mind, suppressing an eye roll.

... Yeah, despite his mathematical genius, the man was incapable of speaking like a normal human being.

Seriously, a few more words wouldn’t hurt him. “Hand me the papers, *please*,” or even a “thank you,” every blue moon. Fucking illiterate bastard.

“What did you major in again?” Harry asked, out of the blue once more, before he could stop himself.

Tom raised an eyebrow at him, his expression long-suffering by this point. But for whatever reason, he indulged Harry anyways. “I have Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees in Business and Computer Science.”

Oh fucking hell. A Business *and* a Computer Science boy. No wonder he was insufferable.

Harry robotically lifted the papers from the printer and stapled them before holding them out to his boss, his grip tightening vindictively around the papers just enough to leave a wrinkle in them.

Harry smirked. Riddle *hated* wrinkles.

Sure enough, his boss snatched the papers from Harry’s grip with an almost predictable annoyance, his jaw flexing ever so slightly with frustration that one wouldn’t be able to pick up on unless they were actively *looking* for it.

Riddle looked up, meeting Harry’s eyes with his own dark, unreadable ones.

“You’re dismissed. Enjoy what remains of your weekend.” He eyed Harry analytically. “Get some sleep. You look terrible.”

Harry stilled, his muscles tensing up.

You look terrible.

Perhaps it was *because* of his lack of sleep. At any rate, Harry found himself standing up straighter, bristling at Riddle's last comment with renewed irritability and utter humiliation.

Why, how observant of you, Mr. Riddle!

No, please, do go on. Is it the hair? Or perhaps the black circles under my eyes, courtesy of my boss?

Harry gritted his teeth. The tactless bastard was the very reason behind his haggard appearance and he had the audacity to comment on it?

"Thanks," Harry drawled sarcastically, not missing the flash in his boss's eyes as he hastily grabbed his backpack and slung it over his shoulder. He turned around, eager to leave before the man could possibly incite him further—

"Harry—the cups."

Harry paused at the low voice, turning his head slightly and staying still.

Riddle raised an eyebrow expectantly, gesturing towards the two coffee cups at the edge of his desk. "Well? Throw them out."

Harry's eyebrows twitched.

There is a garbage right next to your desk. Attached to your desk.

But he didn't say any of these things. Instead, he bore holes into the small black garbage approximately one and half feet away from Riddle's hand, which lay resting on his desk.

Riddle raised an eyebrow, catching on. "But I only have recycling and trash here." He crossed his fingers together and leaned his chin upon them. "Surely, being the environmentalist that you are, you are aware that the coffee cups are *compostable*."

Harry stared.

Yes, he was perfectly aware. He was also very much aware of the fact that the nearest compost bin was four floors up, in the opposite direction of this building's exit, and another ten minute delay to the he reached back home.

Biting back a snarl of frustration, Harry turned around to face his boss fully, mustering up a pained, sleep-deprived smile.

"Of course, sir."

* * *

After going over his notes one final time, Tom settled comfortably back into his chosen chair. The Board meeting room was empty save for him, guaranteeing complete privacy.

He swiped at his phone screen and, at last, deigned to view the messages that had recently flooded his Fanfiction inbox folder.

The notifications had been there since morning, but he'd resolved not to open it until his designated email-checking time. Discipline was a key aspect of his success, and even something as addictive as fanfiction could not threaten the stability of his schedule.

The first few emails were predictable. Updates on gaining Fanfiction followers, notifications for the kudos his stories had recently gained on Ao3, a couple of "Plz updateee" comments that nearly made him toss his phone across the room.

After a few more swipes, Tom came across something different from the norm.

A response to his comment on *boss from hell*.

>> lightning_boi: My crops are watered. My skin is clear. *God* has kudosed, bookmarked, subscribed to, AND COMMENTED (you forgot 😊) on my story and my life will never be the same. Thank you, thank you, thank you 😊😊❤❤❤

Tom stared at the comment for a solid minute, nonplussed.

... Crops?

Was lightning_boi a farmer?

Why was he mentioning his *skin*?

And why was the comment so... *noisy* ? It would have been perfectly acceptable if not for all of those annoying faces— *emojis* —cluttering up the comment in an almost juvenile way.

Still. Tom found he couldn't look away from the comment. There was something magnetic about lightning_boi's enthusiasm and excitement, something about his message that drew him in.

... *you forgot* 😊

The corner of his mouth curled up without permission. *Cheeky brat*.

He typed out a rapid reply and sent it, before continuing to scroll through his email. But lightning_boi's words seemed to stay with him even as he read other comments, like the way he'd called Tom ' *God* ' and the way he'd—

"Smiling, Tom?" said a brusque, feminine voice. "What evil plot to take over the world has struck your fancy?"

Tom stiffened, instantly swiping his screen shut and looking over at the woman he'd seated herself next to him.

"Good afternoon, Minerva," he replied evenly, barely bothering to camouflage the distaste in his tone.

Minerva McGonagall—a manager within the Human Resources department—hadn't reported to him for ages. He'd thought she'd quit, or been fired by someone higher than him...

And now she was here?

What was she *doing* here? She didn't hold nearly enough importance to be attending such a

meeting.

Reading the obvious question in Tom's eyes, Minerva smiled thinly.

"Executive positions have been undergoing a shift for the past couple of weeks." She pulled out another folder with documents, barely sparing him a glance. "I'm now the Vice President of Human Resources, reporting directly to the COO at the moment."

Tom stilled, his features blanking in surprise.

Not only was that *quite* the promotion, but the fact that she now held a position which had previously belonged to a certain old fool...

His mouth curled into a genuine smile.

Had Dumbledore been *fired*?

This was *excellent* news.

"Congratulations, Minerva." Tom smirked conspiratorially, glee bubbling in his stomach. "I'm sure Dippet has eased your transition into the role quite nicely. Speaking from *experience*," he couldn't resist emphasizing his seniority, "He's quite easy to work under."

Indeed, Tom reported to Dippet as well. And he could definitively say that if there was anyone due for retirement among the executive board, it was that *joke* of an executive.

It was as if he came to office just to sit in a chair all day. Which, if Tom was honest, made it quite easy for him to make decisions however he liked *on* the man's behalf.

Besides, if nepotism worked in his favor, Tom would surely be taking *over* the man's role in the next set of long-due promotions.

Tom faced Minerva once more, only to find her staring at him silently, unnervingly.

"Did you not attend the last Board meeting?" she asked cautiously.

Tom raised his eyebrows, leaning back in his chair and crossing his arms. "No. I was traveling for work on the CEO's direct orders."

Minerva stared at him blankly for a split-second longer. Then she smiled, a slow, secret, positively feline smile that Tom definitely disliked.

"I see."

Tom turned away, refusing to be provoked.

After their conversation had died down, more executives filed into the room. Some new faces, mostly old faces.

With a minute left for the meeting to start, a certain old man with twinkling blue eyes and an eccentric pink shirt entered the room. All eyes in the room were drawn to him, the noise level abating with an enviable ease at the man's arrival.

Tom scowled. Evidently, Dumbledore had *not* retired.

And if he hadn't left his previous position at Morsmordre for the sake of retirement, that could

only mean...

Tom tensed with uncertainty as Dumbledore began to *speak*. By what authority, Tom had no *clue*...

“Good afternoon, everyone,” he started cheerfully. “The results of last meeting’s votes have been out since two weeks ago. As of this meeting, your new roles are in effect.”

Tom paused in shock, unable to prevent his eyebrows from shooting upwards this time.

Voting? The board and non-board executives had voted on new executive positions at the last meeting?

... And the CEO had *conveniently* sent him away on the day this was scheduled to happen?

Tom’s hand curled into a violent fist underneath the table, rage boiling in his blood as he attempted to keep listening, to keep his head *clear*.

Dumbledore cleared his throat, his piercing blue eyes glancing around the room. “The CEO will be arriving a couple of minutes late, so I will start us off for the time being.” He smiled serenely. “As your new President and COO...”

Tom paled.

No.

Unacceptable.

Albus Dumbledore had been appointed the new COO by the board majority at the last meeting.

“... I would like to begin by saying a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!”

As the other executive member broke into laughter, no doubt finding their COO’s sense of humor endearingly eccentric, Tom remained straight-faced, numb.

This lunatic was now his direct superior, and everything suddenly had gone horribly, horribly wrong.

* * *

Harry fell asleep on the sofa as soon as he got home.

He woke up to Ron shuffling out of his room at eleven in the morning, half-asleep but fully-dressed and carrying a small duffel bag.

“I’m going to get this dry cleaned,” Ron yawned, holding up his police uniform to show off all the red blotches across the front.

That woke Harry up.

“Seriously mate? Again?” He rubbed his eyes as he sat up on the sofa, his hand instinctively searching for his phone.

Ron rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly. “Yeah, yeah. I know, I have *got* to stop visiting that burger place after my shifts. Ketchup stains are hell to remove.”

“Or you could just... eat more cleanly,” Harry offered with amusement as he stood up and walked towards the kitchen, causing Ron to frown exaggeratedly at him.

“Man, that boss has turned you into a downright priss.”

Harry rolled his eyes and swatted Ron’s backside, eliciting a strangled yelp from his best friend.

“Oi! Save that treatment for your future boyfriend.”

Ron paused, grinning. “Or perhaps for your boss *from hell* ...”

Harry made a face, grimacing as memories of his wretched morning came to mind. “Oh, not now. Don’t even mention him,” He rubbed at his forehead wearily, “That son of a *bitch* ...”

Ron hummed sympathetically. “Rough morning?”

Harry grunted noncommittally, still half-asleep, which Ron took as a “yes” and a sign to reassuringly (and somewhat condescendingly) pat him on the back. “It’ll get better. Moody hated my guts too when I first started, but I think he’s starting to warm up to me... he even called me by my actual name, the other day...”

By the time Ron had left the house, Harry was starting to feel like a normal human being again... fully conscious, to begin with.

And in the mood for a good, purging rant.

So he FaceTimed Hermione.

“... When are you coming *baack*, ” Harry ran his hand through his distressed locks. “I *need* you. I need you to kick my ass and tell me when to work and warn me when certain horrible bosses are coming my way...”

His office-best friend and his cubicle neighbor looked back at him with exasperation. “Harry,” she began seriously, “Soon. Definitely way *too* soon. Because I don’t want to ever *leave* this place.”

She paused for effect, before continuing, “I am on a *very* exciting business trip in the *City of Masks* !”

Hermione gestured around herself, moving the phone screen to show the cute villa Italian coffee shop she was sitting inside of. The water right outside of the window shimmered underneath the sun.

Then, with a suddenness that had Harry’s head reeling slightly, Hermione jerked the screen back to herself.

“Do you know how long I have dreamed of coming here?”

“Yeah, but—”

“Ten years from now, Venice will no longer exist. Global warming will cause the water level to rise and completely *submerge* this wonderful city. At least let me *savor* it while I *can* —”

“Yes! Sorry! You’re right,” Harry raised his hands in surrender. The passion of Hermione Granger

could not be withstood. “Let’s discuss Venice instead.”

He took a sip of his hot chocolate before raising his eyebrows in interest. “Oh yeah, and how did that deal with the author of *A Song of Earth and Air* go?”

Hermione leaned back in her chair. “Ohh, it was fantastic, Harry! He said that he’s willing to get out draft by next Monday, which gives me time to...”

Hermione went on about the meeting with him and Harry listened, intrigued as ever.

After all, she was the Editorial Director of Morsmorde’s Science Fiction & Fantasy Department... the dream job Harry had been applying for when he’d first entered Morsmordre.

He’d resented her for a bit at first because of that, which was probably why they hadn’t gotten along at first.

But then, weirdly enough, they’d bonded over the strangest of things.

She walked like a woman with purpose, back straight and stiff, her brown curls bounced around her.

Hermione slammed her papers down on the desk in the cubicle right next to his.

“I. HATE. RIDDLE,” she seethed, and at that moment, Harry felt himself warming up to his neighbor.

“... Okay but, enough about my work.” Hermione looked at Harry. “How is your new apartment?”

Harry smiled warmly. “Oh, it’s great! Ro—my roommate likes it too.”

His smile transformed into a grin. The redhead had faced no problems slipping back into their old apartment routines with him.

Ron was his best friend since high school, even though it felt like they’d been friends all their lives. They knew everything about each other at this point and, wow, he really owed Ron for putting up with all of Harry’s shitty attitude problems lately due to work. And Hermione, for that matter.

Harry was damn lucky to have such great friends.

And it helped that Ron was a heavy sleeper, so he didn’t so much as blink when Harry came home super late or left at ungodly early hours just because a certain *boss* of his was running him ragged —

“Well, that’s good.” Hermione smiled back before looking back down at her papers before her. “I should be back by next Thursday, so if you need help with moving in or anything—”

Harry held up a hand. “I’m good, Mione.”

Hermione looked up, biting her lip nervously. “Well, perhaps I could take a look around?” She smiled shyly. “I’d love to see it!”

Harry paused as guilt flooded him.

He’d been close friends with Hermione for quite a while now, and he’d always felt bad for never inviting her home despite how much she’d helped him, been there for him, and invited *him* over countless times.

But it's just that he couldn't afford to have his two best friends meet.

Ron. Hermione.

Because, you see, *HeadGirl* and *RoonilWazlib* were... acquainted on the Jarvolo Discord.

No. *Acquainted* was putting it friendly.

Their tastes, fanfiction-wise, were completely different.

RoonilWazlib enjoyed reading 10,000 words of smut, while HeadGirl would rather read 500,000 words of angst, unresolved sexual tension, and banter.

RoonilWazlib liked Omegaverse and femslash, while HeadGirl disliked both.

They were, in every way, opposite, and they'd made their contrary opinions very clear on the Discord, so much to the point where there was a separate channel made, inspired by them, called #oldmarriedcouple. Where fanfictionists with opposing opinions on tropes and ships could argue, separate from everyone else, thereby allowing everyone else on the Discord to (live) read and write in peace.

If they met in real life... if they ever *knew* got to know who the other was, all chaos would erupt.

Harry smiled nervously.

"Of course, Mione."

Also, they would probably murder Harry for keeping the knowledge of each other's identities from them for so long.

Right then, his phone buzzed to let him know that he had about a dozen new emails. Because he had no self-control, Harry checked his refreshed email while FaceTiming Hermione ("Sorry, one moment,...")... and nearly dropped his phone.

It was another comment from Lord_Voldemort_. A response to his response.

Harry placed a hand on his beating chest.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: ...Unsubscribed. ;]

Oh my god. That smirk-face.

Was Lord_Voldemort_ trying to *kill* him?

"... Are you done?" Hermione asked, now typing something up on the laptop screen.

"HERMIONE!" Harry burst out loudly, causing Hermione to look straight back at him. He collapsed down onto the sofa, buzzing with excitement. "I can't believe I forgot to—you won't *believe* what happened."

"What? "

"Lord Voldemort commented on my story."

As Harry began to explain what had happened the night before, Hermione continued to stare at him in utter disbelief.

“Hold on, let me send you a screenshot of our conversation.”

Harry messaged it to her, watching her face as she read the whole thread of conversation between them. Her expressions were priceless—her eyes, wide with shock, grew even wider with awe.

She stood up from the desk she’d been sitting at abruptly, nearly knocking over her chair. A few passerbys in the screen looked up at her in annoyance, but she only had eyes for the messaged screenshot Harry had sent her.

“Oh. My. God. Harry this is—”

“I know!”

“— *Unbelievable*. Do you realize how incredible this is? To the current knowledge of the *James Evans* fandom, Voldemort has never commented on another fanfiction, ever, before... this.”

“I realize that! I—”

“This must be shared!”

Harry’s eyebrows shot up. “I... um... okay?” He laughed, feeling more carefree than he had all day. “Sure, whatever. Share it on the Discord if you want—”

His phone buzzed again. A message, this time.

Tom Riddle: Come to the office. Now.

Harry’s smile froze on his face. He could feel the happiness draining out of him as a cold feeling crept up his limbs.

“*Shit*.” He bit out frustratedly. “Shit, shit, shit.”

Hermione looked at him through the FaceTime screen, alarmed. “What now?”

Harry ran a stressed hand through his wild locks. “Riddle is calling me back to the office.” *And he sounds really, really mad.*

Hermione looked at him with a frown. “Seriously? Even after this morning?”

“Ugh. Yeah,” Harry scrambled to send a quick reply back, pressing send. “Listen, I’ve got to go—”

“Of course. Talk later, Harry.”

“See you.”

After Harry had switched off the call, Hermione stared at the darkened phone call screen with concern for a few moments.

And then she switched back to the screenshot Harry had sent her, bubbling with excitement. Hermione posted the snapshot in the #general tab of the Jarvolo Discord, including a small blurb and link to where the comment thread could be found.

And that was how lightning_boi and Lord_Voldemort_ ended up becoming the talk of the Jarvolo fandom.

* * *

Chamber of Secrets: #general

>> **SpinnetToWinIt:** It's gone viral! I repeat, the screenshot has gone *viral*

>> **LavendarBrown:** It's ALL OVER tumblr, just search #lightningVolt

>> **Parvati_AphroditeWho:** THAT'S their new SHIP NAME?

>> **LavendarBrown:** I KNOW it's FREAKING ADORABLE

>> **AngelinaJolie:** holy shit I'm with you guys. I just can't stop thinking about that lightning_boi and Lord_Voldemort_ comment banter

>> **MickeyCorner:** No one can, apparently.

silence

>> **Forge:** wow buddy chill. Who broke up with you recently lmfao (@GingerGorl can't believe you ever e-dated this dude)

>> **MickeyCorner:**

Discord: *MickeyCorner has left the server.*

>> **Gred:** HAHFHWEUHA

>> **GingerGorl:** Fred shut up and stop pinging me, I'm in class

>> **AngelinaJolie:** Huh, so *that's* Fred.

>> **HeadGirl:** Forget Michael. Guys— *guys*. This is the perfect opportunity to discuss this wonderful snippet and insight into Voldemort's personality AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, the possibility of a blooming romance!?

>> **RoonilWazlib:** so she does have a romantic bone in her body

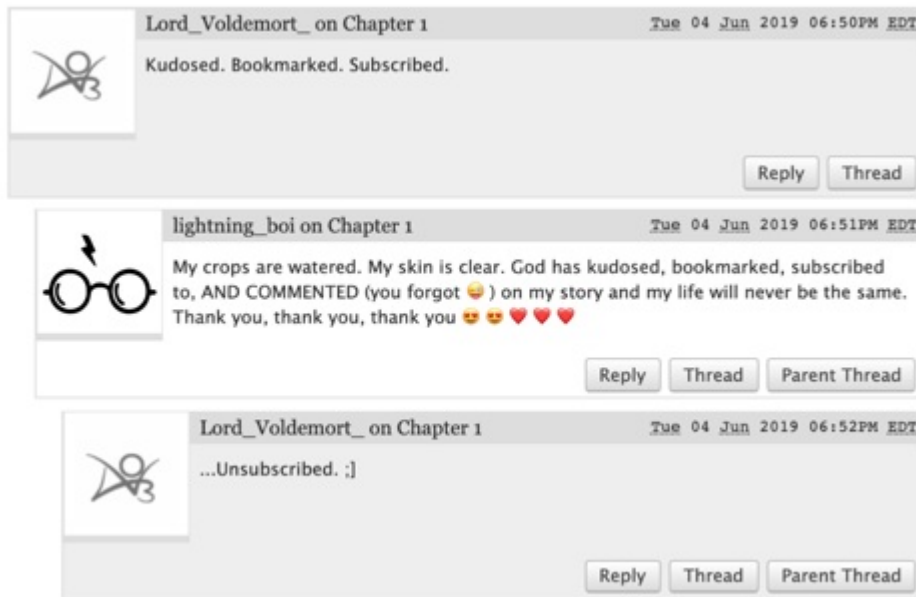
>> **Gred:** Oh, brother...

>> **HeadGirl:** Graciously ignoring Ronald's side comment—what are your *thoughts, guys?*

>> **RoonilWazlib:** don't fucking call me that

>> **Forge:** Ronald show some respect for our mod lady for once jesus fucking christ

>> **AngelinaJolie:** Hold on—let me re-post the conversation thread here:



>> **LavendarBrown:** *sigh*

>> **AngelinaJolie:** I mean, this may look like *nothing* to an outsider who has no knowledge of Jarvolo fanfics and authors...

>> **AngelinaJolie:** But I mean, holy shit.

>> **HeadGirl:** “Unsubscribed,” he says. From anyone else, this would look straight-up aggressive.

>> **HeadGirl:** But coming from Lord Voldemort... well, it’s practically FLIRTATION from him.

>> **AngelinaJolie:** And that little smirk face, holy mother of god. Voldy’s tryna kill us.

>> **SpinnetToWinIt:** Our little lightning_boi ‘bout to cop some Voldemort :lenny face:

>> **Voice_of_Reason:** Hold it ladies. We don’t even know how Voldemort looks—how can we possibly be rooting for him?

>> **SpinnetToWinIt:** lee you shallow man

>> **AngelinaJolie:** lee? YOU CHANGED YOUR NAME AGAIN??? Dumbass you changed it two days ago

>> **Forge:** hey let the man breathe. Here on the Jarvolo discord, we have the freedom to express ourselves in whichever way we want—fanfiction, fanart, and yes, even usernames.

>> **HeadGirl:** To quote the Discord Rules, “Please refrain from changing your username once you join.”

>> **HeadGirl:** Also, to be fair, you don’t know what lightning_boi looks like either. But just because you don’t know how they look, doesn’t mean they can’t be shipped <3

>> **Voice_of_Reason:** but... what if he’s really ugly? Or really old?

>> **Forge:** or what if... Lord Voldemort is actually a seventy-two-year-old mass murderer who looks like a snake and has red eyes ‘cause he’s albinic and he lives on the other side of the world from Harry?

>> **AngelinaJolie:** ...

>> **SpinnetToWinIt:** ...

>> **HeadGirl:** You've been reading too much fanfiction.

>> **Forge:** Ha. Horror, gen, and quidditch fics amiright bois?

>> **Voice_of_Reason:** Damn straight

>> **Parvati_AphroditeWho:** Why are you guys even on this discord?

>> **Gred:** joined to look out for my kid sis after she e-dated some creep

>> **Forge:** ^^

>> **AngelinaJolie:** Hmm... okay, but going back a bit—Fred brings up a great point. I mean, @Forge, what if *I* am actually a sixty-year-old woman with bad breath? Would you stop declaring your love for me every two seconds?

>> **Fred:**

Discord: Fred has changed his name to *Grannie_Lover*

Discord: Grannie_Lover has kissed AngelinaJolie

>> **AngelinaJolie:** forget I asked

Two hours later:

Chamber of Secrets: #general

>> **Viktory:** forgeev my english

>> **Viktory:** i know my time zone is very off from most of yours

>> **Viktory:** but i couldn't help but scroll back and view your previous conversation on Lord Voldemort

>> **Viktory:** I just wanted to confirm that—according to my sources—the Dark Lord is verrry hot

>> **ChoAegyo:** uwu

>> **ChoAegyo:** how do u knowwww?

>> **HeadGirl:** Yes, what are your sources?

>> **LavendarBrown:** and why are you calling him the Dark Lord jesus christ you make him sound like a mass murderer or smth

>> **Viktory:** he has an exclusive discord for certain fans—I know someone in it

>> **Viktory:** and that's what his greatest fans call him when conversing with him. It's what he likes to be called

>> **Viktory:** and according to my sources—he is, “indescribably hot,” so presumably she has seen a picture of him

>> **LavendarBrown:** !!!!!!!

>> **Parvati_AphroditeWho:** Oh. My. God.

* * *

Harry slammed the door shut behind him as he entered the apartment, his mood darker than the sky outside.

Riddle hadn't even *been at the office building*. Harry had entered his office, only to see a sticky note atop a pile of papers on his desk that read: *Spring cleaning. Call the top thirty authors and report on their productivity.*

So. Freaking. Annoying.

Harry wasn't completely oblivious. He could easily tell that Riddle had been in a bad mood when he'd messaged Harry. And yet, was it necessary to *always* take out his frustration on his PA ?

Screw it. If he read any more messages from his boss, Harry was going to murder his pet snake. (Because yeah, Riddle actually kept a pet snake, who has a fucking snake?) So he resolved to simply avoid that situation in the first place.

He shut off his phone and kept it aside.

He had an early morning tomorrow, but Harry didn't particularly care. At the moment, all he wanted to do was plug into some music, open up a blank Google document on his laptop, and *write*.

So he did.

Harry sat down on his favorite sofa, purposefully keeping his notifications for Discord and other social media off so he could just focus on writing.

He doubted he'd missed much, anyways.

At first, after a long, gruelling day at work, the last thing had Harry wanted to do was write the next chapter of his Office AU fanfiction. But then he began to remember how *boss from hell* was the very work Lord_Voldemort_ was subscribed to... and, well...

Oh hell, Harry exhaled, a smile threatening to overcome his lips. Just thinking about it brightened his mood all over again. It filled him with nervous energy and disbelief and unbelievable happiness.

And suddenly, he didn't know why, but he felt extremely impatient. Like his fingers were itching to type something out, like *he* was itching to get something out, he just didn't know what.

He began to type.

“Enter,” drawled the low voice.

I walked in, steeling myself for the worst as I lowered my files onto the boss’s desk. Marvolo stared at the papers before flickering his gaze back to me, unreadable, waiting for something I could not comprehend.

“What?” I asked defensively, crossing my arms as I ran through a mental checklist of all the tasks. I’d pulled an all-nighter for this report, it had better have come out alright...

“Why aren’t you... ” Marvolo started, his gaze traveling downwards.”... wearing pants?”

Harry’s fingers stuttered to an abrupt stop.

He facepalmed.

What the hell. This work wasn’t supposed to be *crack*. Hell, this didn’t even read like crack, it read like the start of a bad *dream*.

No, this just wouldn’t do.

Harry deleted whatever he’d written and hovered his fingers over the keyboard once more. He squeezed his eyes shut, thinking of an idea, a scene, a moment, anything.

“... which equals, 4,987.”

I stared at my boss, feeling heat suffuse my cheeks with a vehemence that could not be prevented. Had he done all of that... in his head?

Harry smirked. A *math kink*... oh, yes. Let’s hope other people enjoyed this as much as he did.

“... Does that make sense?” Marvolo paused, staring at me penetratingly.

“Y-yes,” I stuttered, unable to say otherwise in the face of such intelligence. I’d always found intelligence intimidating, mostly because I was dumb as hell, but I never thought I’d find it so... attractive in a person. What the fuck.

This sucked. Riddle always made me feel so insignificant in every way—better-looking, more charismatic, more successful, more intelligent...

What right did he have to make me feel this way as well? This unwanted attraction, hopelessly unrequited and endlessly inconvenient. I was nothing more than a personal assistant to him, and that’s all I would ever be.

Perhaps it was that lovesick, blindly hopeful part of me. But as I exited the office, I could have sworn I felt his gaze lingering on me, tangible, burning heat across my limbs—

Harry stopped typing. Because as he’d continued to do so, a sudden flurry of images that looked like *Tom Riddle* had come to mind.

He frowned. Tom Riddle—associated with the dashing Marvolo of his dreams? This wouldn’t do.

Tom Riddle had nothing, *nothing* on the Dark Lord—

The loud, creaking swing of the front door vaguely alerted Harry to Ron’s entrance.

Harry pulled out his earbuds briefly, listening for the usual curse words as Ron inevitably hit his head on the door head, before plugging back in. He deleted a couple of paragraphs and began to rewrite them...

Ron grinned wildly at him as he walked into the living room.

“Hey, mate. How does it feel to be a celebrity?”

“Hmm?” Harry hummed as he continued typing. He was vaguely aware of Ron sitting next to him on the sofa, reaching an arm around the back of the sofa to grab the remote.

“Well, your conversation thread with Voldemort has been posted all across Tumblr, so that’s nice and all.”

“That’s nice,” Harry said distractedly as he continued to type.

Then he stopped, staring at his best friend with wide eyes as Ron’s words finally registered.

“*WHAT?*”

Ron laughed and showed him his phone, and the conversation from the comments section of his Ao3 work—his banter with Voldemort—was there, out on social media for the world to see. Originally posted by PossiblyRelatedToMichaelJordan and re-blogged by countless other familiar names... and unfamiliar names.

Harry’s eyes only grew wider as he took in the sheer number of notes and re-posts his conversation had.

5,488 notes. 1,734 re-blogs.

When he’d given Hermione permission to share the conversation, he hadn’t actually... anticipated...

Harry scrambled for his own phone, switching notifications back on for all of his social media and scrolling through tumblr after searching his name. There were countless mentions of lightning_boi, it was insane. And they all revolved around that one conversation.

Searching #lightning_boi before would have yielded him three results before—now, it yielded him over three hundred.

And Harry seemed to have gained a hundred followers as well.

He read through all of his comments, checked out the number of followers he’d gained on every other platform, and flickered through all of his messages.

Harry flushed.

“They’re... they’re—”

“They’re shipping you guys together,” Ron said, snorting. “Look up #lightningVolt—that’s your ship name by the way—”

Harry did. 456 results.

Oh my god.

Oh my god oh my god oh my god ohmoygodojmykofajksjfhaj—

Hell, there was *fanart* about him and Lord Voldemort. What the— *what—how—*

It featured a boy with glasses and a lightning bolt scar—probably based on Harry’s profile avatar from Ao3 and tumblr—and the mysterious silhouette of a man. Voldemort’s form was muscular, fully black... save for the white outline of tie and collar.

“Heh,” Ron muttered. “They made Voldemort *taller* than you.”

Harry found he didn’t mind one bit.

The artist had given Lord Voldemort a *suit*. And to be honest, Harry couldn’t imagine Voldemort wearing anything else now—the concept embodied him so perfectly.

The way Lord_Voldemort wrote was so *classy*, so strangely old-fashioned and yet timelessly sophisticated, like a mix between an Edgar Allen Poe poem and an Agatha Christie mystery novel. And if Voldemort *dressed* the way he wrote, well... surely, he maintained the same impeccable, classic taste.

Harry screen-shotted and saved the art in a folder offline—to treasure it forever—before continuing to flicker through his messages.

And finally, after checking all of his messages across all of his @lightning_boi accounts, Harry checked his long-since abandoned Fanfiction account.

There, too, was a message. A private, anonymous message:

“If anyone asks, I never invited you. I strongly recommend using an entirely new username.

Enjoy: <https://discordapp.com/innercircle/713>”

~ R.A.B.

Harry stilled, looking over at Ron—who, at this point, was blatantly looking over Harry’s shoulder.

Needing no further encouragement, he clicked on the link.

Harry’s jaw dropped.

It was an invitation to join *The Inner Circle*.

Lord_Voldemort_’s exclusive Discord.

Chapter End Notes

*Some context behind Parvati's nickname (Parvati_AphroditeWho)—Parvati is the name of the Hindu goddess of love.

Food for thought: If Dumbledore is the COO, who do you think is the CEO? ;)

And finally—I now have a tumblr: <https://maquira713.tumblr.com/>

(I've posted some KBS fan-art and future snippets there.)

Thanks for reading guys!

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Has it already been a month? Wow. But believe it not, it might have been longer than that if not for my lovely mutual beta/writer-in-crime, Luxis. <33333

Happy Fourth of July!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Harry's jaw dropped.

It was an invitation to join The Inner Circle.

Lord_Voldemort_'s exclusive Discord server.

Harry's fingers hovered over the keyboard while he tried to think of a new pseudonym.

"Alright... okay..." he muttered to himself. "Something elegant. Something impressive."

Ron snorted, still looking over Harry's shoulder as he jokingly suggested, "Scabbers," and a couple of other names that had Harry staring back at his roommate in disbelief.

"Are you trying to name *me* or a pet?"

Ron's mouth quirked once in good humor. "Oh, come on, I actually liked the name Hugo."

As they continued to discuss possible Discord pseudonyms, Harry's mind began to wander.

An excited buzz had been threatening to overwhelm him since he'd first read clicked on the Discord invitation link. He was thrilled and nervous and happy, *hell, he was getting the opportunity to interact with Voldemort*, and yet...

R.A.B.'s mysterious message played in his mind once more.

"If anyone asks, I never invited you. I strongly recommend using an entirely new username."

Harry's mouth twitched in the ghost of a frown.

R.A.B. seemed to imply that his presence as lightning_boi might somehow displease some of Voldemort's fans. Which was... ridiculous! Completely and utterly unfounded.

Although Harry had no clue what the environment of Voldemort's Discord server would be like, and he didn't wish to stick out like a sore thumb or incriminate himself in any way...

He *did* want to gain Voldemort's attention.

In case you already haven't, a small voice whispered within him .

Harry swallowed dryly, stomach churning with anticipation. He wondered just how Voldemort was taking all of this LightningVolt hype. Was he pleased? Amused?

He frowned, his thoughts taking a darker turn.

Or was Voldemort disinterested? Disgusted or annoyed, perhaps?

“Hey, wait,” Ron said abruptly, distracting Harry from his downward spiral. “What about that fake name you used for Tinder once?”

Harry paused in contemplation. “Hadrian Evans?” A mash-up of a poshier version of his own first name and his mother’s maiden last name.

That... could work.

He logged in, now wearing a new pseud.

And was immediately pinged.

Inner Circle: #welcome

>> **Nagini [Bot]:** Hello @Hadrian_Evans, and welcome to *The Inner Circle*. This server tracks and discusses Lord_Voldemort_’s fanfiction. Please check out the #rules channel for more information. Enjoy ~

Harry stared. He re-read the bot’s impersonal message, inanely searching for any hint of Voldemort in it.

When nothing happened, he scrolled down the sidebar, checking out some of the other channels on the server.

Harry bit his lower lip cautiously, uncertainty beginning to build up within him. Because, oh man, #trash-talking and #trolling? Some of these channels seemed rather... *unfriendly*.

But before he could navigate to any of them, a flood of several pings vibrated from his laptop, within the same #welcome channel.

>> **Ra_beast_an:** Oh? Fresh meat...

>> **Rodolphus:** @Bella_Tricks, if you’re up to a little hazing ;)

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Hehehehehehe. It would be my *pleasure* , hubby.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Hadrian_Evans, darling. How are you?

Harry startled as he read his own name on the screen. He didn’t know what to make of this, of *them* . But when he turned around to ask Ron, his redheaded friend was already asleep.

He turned back to face his laptop as it emitted another ping.

And then another, and another.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Oh, shy? Come on out, we don’t bite. Not *really*.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Little itty bitty Evans... come out, come out wherever you are!

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Hadrian_Evans

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Hadrian_Evans

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Hadrian_Evans

Harry exited out of the tab, his heart pounding furiously, fingers trembling over the keys.

What ... *what* had just *happened*?

That hadn't just been uncomfortable. It had been *terrifying*. He'd been singled out, called out, harassed.

Fresh meat?

We don't bite?

What did they fancy themselves, sharks? Trolls?

Well, Harry pursed his lips as he navigated back to Discord with newfound determination. Troll-infested waters wouldn't be stopping him from potentially meeting the... ahem... *Volt* to his *LightningVolt*.

(*Really, Harry? Really?* muttered a small, cringing inner voice.)

Harry clicked back onto *The Inner Circle* server and scrolled fiercely back to #welcome, typing in a response.

>> **Hadrian_Evans:** hey

He remained tense, awaiting the unavoidable *ping* that greeted him seconds later.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Hadrian, darling! You finally *came* ;))))))

Harry shuddered, put off by her enthusiasm for some indefinable reason.

When he didn't respond after a few seconds, he received another ping.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Hide and seek, Hadrian? Hehehe, tricks are for kids, silly.

Harry blinked. Okay, this woman was seeming more and more crazy by the second.

>> **Hadrian_Evans:** uh yeah, I

>> **Hadrian_Evans:** I was overwhelmed

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Well, we can't have that! Let me introduce you ~ to my party people ~ in the cluuuuub

Against all odds, Harry found himself relaxing at the familiar reference, his mouth twitching into a smile.

>> **Hadrian_Evans:** Jennifer Lopez?

>> **Bella_Tricks:** So you have good taste! Lovely, lovely...

Bella_Tricks is typing, read the Discord.

Harry leaned back, waiting.

And then, to his utmost horror—

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Narcissus_Flower @SmolDragon *aww nephykins your new pseud*

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Mr. Always **eye roll** change your pseud moron, you sound like a pad ad

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Fartemius_Slouch @Luscious_M @YOLOhov @Thunderous_Thor
@Runaway_Regulus @FenrirLeers @KarkarofficiallyDead

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Everyone! Meet @Hadrian_Evans, our latest member!

>> **Mr. Always:** You forgot Peter.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Oh, did I?

>> **Bella_Tricks:**

>> **Mr. Always:**

>> **Mr. Always:** **sigh**

>> **Mr. Always:** @quietUnsuspectingRat

. . .

And so that was how Harry was introduced to Voldemort's most loyal fans. Throughout the week, he explored the other channels of *The Inner Circle* server.

He quickly learned that these fans were absolutely nothing like his friends in the *Chamber of Secrets*.

Inner Circle: #trash-talk

>> **SmolDragon:** Have any of you seen that new Jarvolo fanfiction posted by HeadGirl? The Scientists AU?

>> **Mr. Always:** I bookmarked it, actually.

>> **SmolDragon:** Honestly the author's such an insufferable know-it-all. Like, if you know so much about chemistry, just go write a research paper.

>> **Henchman1:** yeah she shoold just go write a paper

>> **SmolDragon:**

>> **Henchman1:** wut?

>> **SmolDragon:** ... Since when are you on this server, Vincent?

>> **SmolDragon:** I mean

>> **SmolDragon:** I didn't know you could *read*

>> **Henchman1:** well, I learnd how to read the othre day, you see

>> **Henchman1:** in fckin preskool

>> **Mr. Always:** It appears he's learned *sarcasm* as well.

>> **Mr. Always:** Still working on learning how to *write*, unfortunately.

>>**SmolDragon:** Still, at least he's more tolerable than HeadGirl... and not to mention, she's got the most *ridiculous* name too—

Harry gritted his teeth as his hand curled into a fist beneath his work desk, restraining the urge to tear into SmolDragon right there and then.

While Hermione edited many fictional works for a living, she was quite sensitive and shy about her own writing. She had never posted fanfiction until joining the *Chamber of Secrets* server... where her writing was showered with the positivity and praises it deserved in #snippets.

If this dumbass Dragon said a *word* against her works outside of this server...god *help him*...

Then, later that week:

Inner Circle: #trolling

>> **YOLOhov:** Why the fuck does that Quidditch AU posted by Forge and Gred have so many kudos? It sucks.

>> **Fartemius_Slouch:** Ikr? So cliched and and the writing style is way too casual for my tastes...

>> **YOLOhov:** Oh yeah, I even commented, "Literal Cringe" and "Your writing sucks" on the fic. Hopefully that'll teach him to stop posting such nonsense.

Harry nearly exited out of the Discord server right there and then, his blood boiling with fury.

Put simply, the environment of *The Inner Circle* was incredibly toxic, filled with the worst kinds of trolls.

The users on it constantly bullied each other, interrogating each other about their stats on Ao3 and Tumblr. They frequently trashed on others' fics. In fact, Harry learned that most of them *were* the main trolls that the otherwise free-flowing, friendly Jarvolo fandom had been dealing with.

The worst part was that Lord_Voldemort_ hadn't been active on the server at *all* since Harry had joined. He had even searched up Voldemort's username on the server, only to find no past comments from him.

How?

Apparently (according to some of the fans), Voldemort had recently grown paranoid about everything he'd posted on the server... which had resulted in a large-scale wipe out of all the channels on the day Harry coincidentally happened to join.

And no one dared to tag Voldemort in anything, ever, because that was against the #rules. He was evidently a very busy man in real life.

So for the rest of the week, Harry was trapped, wavering between wanting to quit the server immediately and sweetly awaiting, craving the moment Voldemort decided to speak...

Because *surely* Lord_Voldemort_, with his eloquent words and enthralling character-building, was nothing like his horrible, crude Inner Circle.

As it happened, the rest of *The Inner Circle* seemed to share Harry's sentiments on Voldemort's disappearance.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** hmm I'm bored.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** The Dark Lord hasn't been on here in foreverrr

>> **Bella_Tricks:** @Rudolphusss Hubby play *Hunting Mudbloods* with me

>> **Rodolphusss:** Ah, Bella, I was just getting to a really good torture scene in *No Glory* ...

>> **Bella_Tricks:** ... Darling Hubby.

>> **Rodolphusss:** Ofc ofc

Harry shook his head in exasperation, leaning further onto his work desk. The more he learned about Voldemort's most loyal fans, the more he didn't *want* to know.

Bella_Tricks had a nasty habit of talking sweetly when she was at her most vicious. SmolDragon was just a cruel, whiny brat. Rodolphusss and Ra_beast_an were bloodthirsty hounds, and Luscious_M was way too obsessed with showing off how much better he was than everyone else to make proper conversation—

"Harry," Hermione called from the next cubicle. Harry turned his head, only to see his bushy-haired friend leaning back in her chair to see him.

She sighed exasperatedly, peeking around in other neighboring cubicles before quietly saying, "Still obsessed with Voldemort's new server?"

Harry swiped his Discord application off and dejectedly muttered, "*No.* "

At the beginning of the week, he had been thrilled about joining *The Inner Circle*. Nervous, caught off-guard by the overwhelming introduction, but still buzzing with excitement and ready to spill—the motherfucking—tea about how he'd been admitted to Voldemort's exclusive server to all of his Jarvolo buddies.

But now, Harry wasn't sure if there was anything he really wanted to spill. The horrors of the new server were something he'd been internalizing, and the only two people who knew anything *The Inner Circle* were Ron (by circumstance) and Hermione—

"Good," Hermione said brusquely, distracting Harry from his derailing thoughts. "Because lunch break is over and you had better get back to work."

Right. Work. Harry scowled.

Work this week hadn't been too hot either.

Riddle had been in a terrible mood lately. He'd been even more of a hardass than usual, cracking down on Harry constantly and spitting remarks that would have probably sent anyone else crying to the restroom.

He didn't let Harry go home until very late (even when he actually *finished* his work on time, the bastard), which had resulted in Harry feeling quite unsafe on the way home (because public transportation past eleven in *Seattle* was terrifying).

And so there he was, seated at a public transportation station near two obnoxiously loud, scary-looking guys, waiting for the last bus before midnight... when the inevitable happened.

The Inner Circle: #trash-talk

>> **Thunderous_Thor:** I assume you've all heard the talk about LightningVolt.

Harry's heart stuttered.

>> **Mr. Always:** *Obviously.*

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Ohoh, I was just *waiting* for someone to bring that up

>> **Thunderous_Thor:** It's so stoooooopid

>> **Henchman1:** riddikulus

>> **Mr. Always:** Pitiful.

>> **Henchman1:** nice one professor

>> **Mr. Always:** ...Goyle, I was referring to your spelling abilities. | **1** angry react

>> **Bella_Tricks:** LightningVolt! Ha! The concept is *laughable*. The thought that someone so undeserving would be "Internet shipped" with our beloved Lord... *ha*.

>> **Ra_beast_an:** What's the other guy's full pseud anyways? Lightning *_boy* ?

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Certainly not *man* enough for our Lord... let alone *woman* enough. ;)

Harry's jaw dropped in indignation, his fingers itching to type back a response. Because Lord_Voldemort_ was literally writing a *male slash* Office AU at the moment—

No, another part of him, more sly, whispered. *Wait. See what the witch has to say...*

>> **Bella_Tricks:** I stalked lightning's profile and stories the other day.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** First of all, he writes in *first person*.

Exclamations of disgust met her statement, and Harry fought back the urge to flinch at each of them.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Ikr! And then the storyline of all his fanfiction is so mainstream! The main character (usually James) is always hopelessly in love with someone "way out of his league" and seems to have some sort of self-confidence issues.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Always *complaining*... "*Marvolo's an asshole but he's also hot and rich, thus I*

will continue to pine from afar.”

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Pathetic. Absolutely pathetic. Most likely a reflection of the author’s pathetic self.

Harry stopped reading, closing his eyes for a moment to keep himself together.

Yes, so he projected.

So fucking what?

>> **Bella_Tricks:** And—oh, you have got to see the way he begs for comments at the end of his chapters.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** From the end of *boss from hell*:

[img:

lightning_boi: Hey guys! Really hope you liked it and remember to leave comments! Seriously, your comments are everything to me, they give me joy and LIFE. <333]

>> **YOLOhov:** Give him life? More like *get a life*.

Discord: Thor has high-fived YOLOhov.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Honestly, he’s like an animal begging for love and affection. Disgusting, *pitiful*. Does he not get enough attention IRL?

>> **Rodolphusss:** Did his parents not love him enough?

Harry’s fingers shook across the screen as he let out a shuddering breath.

What did they know of his parents? Nothing, absolutely *nothing*—

>> **Thunderous_Thor:** dirty whore attention-seeker

Harry stared numbly at his phone screen, helpless to do anything but continue to read.

>> **Luscious_M:** I suppose most of you haven’t seen lightning_boi’s author’s note after Chapter 11 of *Chained*?

>> **Luscious_M:** For context—He considered changing the main ship of his story (a risky, incestuous one, mind you) to a more popular one just to make his fans happier.

[img:

lightning_boi: I know boy-who-lived x godfather isn’t a ship that everyone likes, and I’m starting to realize that I’ve been really selfish about writing this when others feel uncomfortable.

lightning_boi: I’m really sorry about that. Should I change the ship? Be sure to comment below and let me know what you think.

lightning_boi: Your opinion means so much to me. <3333]

>> **SmolDragon:** Ha. How *weak* can a person be? To have zero confidence in themselves and their

ability to sustain the original ship? To beg for approval from random people online?

>> **Thunderous_Thor:** And who uses “<3333” anyways?

>> **Fartemius_Slouch:** lightning_boi really is an inadequate little shit.

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Unworthy of our Lord’s attentions.

>> **Rodolphusss:** yeah he should quit writing fanfiction, fckin faggot

>> **Ra_beast_an:** mong

By this point, Harry was holding back tears at the bus stop.

His limbs were shaking and his fingers felt so heavy, his eyes were leaking *leaking*. He tried to clench his other hand over his mouth, as if it would stop the loud hiccups that were jumping out of his throat, but it only made it harder for him to *breathe* —

“Fine. *Fine.*” Harry whispered angrily, inanely to himself, his fingers still shaking over the screen as he began to type. “Have it your way.”

>> **Hadrian_Evans:** *I’m lightning_boi. Good fucking bye.* | [**Send**]

He typed it out and read over it a couple of times. But before Harry could press send—

>> **Bella_Tricks:** Though, of course, I think we are all aware of whose opinion we *really* want to hear on this issue... @Lord_Voldemort_

Harry’s wet eyes widened. Did she just...?

The accompanying silence on the Discord was a testament of how shocking Bella_Tricks’s actions had been.

She had just broken the #1 rule in #rules... and tagged Lord_Voldemort_.

Lord_Voldemort_ is now online.

Harry’s heart began to pound.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** You

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** *Dare...*

There was a tense silence throughout the entire server, and it was clear that Voldemort was taking the time to read through the past conversation. Harry shivered, accepting a handkerchief from one of the scary-looking guys at the same stop as him.

Harry waited and waited, his body growing more and more tense. A breeze had begun to pick up, causing him to shiver and curl into himself on the bench.

At least it wasn’t raining—

Ping.

>> **Lord_Voldemort:** lightning_boi holds no importance to me. You may as well stop wasting time debasing him.

Harry stared.

He pressed send.

He quit the server.

. . .

Harry didn't touch Discord for a week. He didn't write fanfiction.

(*Happy, Rodolphus?*)

He was more productive at the office than he had been the entire year. And he was absolutely miserable.

"Harry," Riddle barked as he rounded the corner, nearly making him jump. "Reschedule all of tomorrow's meetings for the following Thursday."

"On it, sir," Harry replied without a backward glance, only pausing once he'd pulled up Riddle's calendar on his phone. "Er, including the one-on-one meeting with the CEO?"

Riddle's expression grew sour and long-suffering.

"Especially that one," he responded tersely, before waving a hand carelessly. "No need to call—just send the customary rescheduling email."

Harry hummed in assent, inwardly wincing because, *Riddle, this is why people don't like you*. Not to mention, some of the people he had been scheduled to meet with were quite influential...

"And when you're done, re-pack and return all of the interns' laptops to IT."

Harry nodded without a word of complaint, even as he spotted the pile of forty-ish laptops that had been placed in the corner of his cubicle. He estimated that it would take at least an hour and a half to re-pack them all, and that assigning them to the new incoming interns would take even longer.

It was already seven in the evening, but that was quite irrelevant to him. What was he going to do when he reached home anyways? Read fanfiction?

Ha, never *fucking* again!

(That was also a lie, given that he'd been addicted to fanfiction since his teen years, but denial made him feel a lot cooler at the moment.)

As absorbed as he was in his dreary atmosphere of thoughts, Harry didn't realize someone was standing inside of his cubicle until he heard the sound of an exhale just a couple of feet away from

him.

Startling a little, Harry swiveled around in his chair.

Riddle was still *here*.

He was leaning against the opposite wall, looking around Harry's cubicle with a mixture of boredom and blatant displeasure. His mouth was slightly open, glistening, showing a hint of the canines that hadn't hesitated to bite out insults all week.

With one glance at him, muscled arms crossed and his head tilted lazily to the side, any passerby would conclude the man to be relaxed.

But the glint in his eyes said otherwise. It was asking for *trouble*.

"... *Yes?*" Harry intoned, too tired to wonder what his boss was up to now. It was easy enough to guess, knowing the man...

"Clean up your workspace. It's a pigsty, almost as bad as your *hair*."

Ah. Harry almost wanted to roll his eyes at the monotony of it. *There we go*. Asshole boss had decided to take out his assholery trash on this fine Thursday evening, and the chosen garbage bin? *Yours truly*.

But unlike every other time, Harry decided not to rise to the bait.

He swiveled around, turning his back on Riddle.

"Got it, sir," Harry said quietly, returning to work diligently. A small, vindictive spark of pleasure filled him when his boss finally left, his urge to bully his poor PA no doubt left unfulfilled.

But once Riddle had taken leave and the office was quiet once more, the warm sensation vanished quickly. And Harry's earlier dreary emptiness returned with a vengeance, somewhat stronger than before.

. . .

Friday was a disaster.

As expected, the customary, polite rescheduling emails that Harry had sent out yesterday night had not gone down well with some of the clients.

Harry ran a hair through his stressed locks, further messing them up. "Look, ma'am—"

"*NO!*" screeched the woman's high-pitched voice. "I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOUR SUPERIOR *RIGHT NOW!*"

At that point, Harry held the phone away from his ears, grimacing across his cubicle to Hermione. She was looking back at him, her concerned look making it clear that she could very well hear the woman's shrill voice from twenty feet away.

Harry muted the phone (through which the woman was still talking, she never seemed to shut *up*)

and looked at Hermione helplessly, wordlessly asking for advice as he always did.

Hermione shook her head, shrugging “At this point, you have no choice but to just go to Riddle.”

Harry stared at her in disbelief as he was unmuting the phone, miming out an emphatic, *Seriously?*

She frowned. “Well, unfortunately, she is one of our more important authors.” She held out her fingers, as if ticking off reasons. “And more than that, she has *connections*.”

Hermione looked at Harry meaningfully. “You know, the type that could really drag a whole company down with a snap of their fingers.”

Moments later, Harry was dragging his sorry, reluctant ass to Riddle’s office.

For once, Riddle didn’t make a fuss, seeming to understand just *who* was on the phone as soon as Harry had entered with a pained look on his face. He held out his hand in his usual, nonvocal, caveman way. *Give*.

“Hello, ma’am. Tom Riddle speaking.”

Riddle tilted in his head while on the phone, staring at Harry in a ‘*Get out*’ sort of way.

Harry, resolutely, raised an eyebrow and decided to stay. That was *his* phone, after all.

Riddle turned away from him, evidently deciding to ignore him. And as he did, he seemed to change entirely—his demeanor lightened into something almost human, his usually stern mouth softening into an almost... strangely seductive smile. His eyebrows relaxed, his whole *posture* relaxed—

And then a low, rich chuckle vibrated from his throat, deep and enthralling. “Of course, Miss. Smith—alright, *Hepzibah*, if you insist.”

Harry stared at his boss with a severely disgusted expression.

Tom Riddle, Executive Vice President... professional suck-up?

What a fake-ass hoe.

It seemed he’d relied on more than his white-boy privilege, good looks, and intelligence to get far in life.

Riddle muted the phone temporarily, shooting Harry an impatient look.

“Might as well make yourself useful and hold the phone to my ear as I pull up her information,” he said, gesturing towards his laptop.

And that was how Harry ended up holding the phone to his boss’s ear, his arm tilted at the most awkward angle. Every time Tom swiveled without a care in the world, Harry was forced to jump around to avoid his feet getting obliterated by the wheels, or his stomach being jabbed by the armrest, or god forbid, *any part of his body* make contact with Riddle’s.

His hand must have been at an awkward angle against Riddle’s ear though, because Riddle tsked irritably and suddenly grasped Harry’s wrists forcefully.

The next moment, Riddle yanked the phone so that it fell parallel against the side of his face. Harry’s wrist was bent upwards at an impossible angle that had him nearly yelping in pain.

As he was gritting his teeth to avoid doing precisely that, Harry vindictively pressed *speaker*.

High-pitched, squealing giggles emerged from Harry's phone at ten times the usual volume, causing his boss to flinch back in an almost comical way, his mouth twisting into a scowl and his eyes squeezing shut in displeasure.

Riddle quickly corrected the volume, flashing an irate look at his personal assistant as Harry stifled a laugh... which, of course, didn't go unnoticed.

Riddle narrowed his eyes further until they were nothing darkened slits. His charming smile now had a blatantly strained look to it, and the dark, positively evil look in his eyes only made it creepier.

He was glaring at Harry, but Harry only smirked back at him, taunting him.

What could he possibly do? Riddle was too focused on kissing up to a client's ass anyways—

Without warning, Riddle swiveled his chair in the opposite direction to grab something from one of his drawers, conveniently stomach-butting Harry with the top of his chair.

And then Harry was hissing in pain, stumbling, his phone-hand straying from Riddle's ear as he tried to maintain his balance—

An arm wrapped around Harry's lower back, catching him and shoving him down onto Riddle's lap. They were chest-to-chest. Harry's legs were on either side of Riddle's hips, instinctively tightening around Riddle's hips to prevent himself from falling off.

Wh-what?

All of Harry's breath left him in one shocked exhale as his gaze landed on the face mere inches away from him... completely serious, focused, and still speaking to Hepzibah Smith like there was nothing he'd rather do.

"I see," Riddle said carefully, hair falling in front of his eyes as he tilted his head forward in concentration, his fingers scrolling down the calendar on his laptop screen. "Is there no way you can finish the final installment of *Lost Artifacts* before the end of June?"

Harry shifted once, subconsciously attempting to get comfortable. But then Riddle's hand trailed up his leg and squeezed his upper thigh tightly, his burgundy eyes flashing with the same warning.

Don't move.

Harry froze. He didn't dare to *breathe*. His heart was pounding so loudly, he was certain Riddle could hear it.

His mind had finally caught up to his body and gone on overdrive, scrambling his senses. Because Riddle's fresh, citrusy cologne was permeating his senses once more. And the only thing he could feel was his hand, still *there*, resting on Harry's leg like that was a perfectly normal thing to do to one's subordinate.

Harry's legs tightened further around Riddle's in nervousness. And then his heart dropped completely, fell through the center of the earth, because *damn*, had Riddle always been this solid?

"Of course, of course..." Riddle smiled warmly, which was simply too out of character for Harry's mind to process, let alone appreciate. "As always, Hepzibah, you have a way of," his eyes fell

upon Harry, "... charming people that is simply unparalleled. We shall continue with this your way, then."

Lies. Clearly, Hepzibah had already succumbed to thinking that what Riddle had wanted had been *her* desire all along.

But Harry hadn't been focusing on these little political details.

He was still stuck on the way Riddle's eyes had fallen on him as he'd talked about *charming* people, unwittingly captivating both Hepzibah and Harry in one go. And now Harry couldn't get over that low voice vibrating right underneath him, so close he could *feel it*. And that rare, warm smile, and the way Riddle *smelled—uhh—*

Harry was losing his *mind*.

It was like he'd fallen under a spell. He had no idea what he was doing. But suddenly, Harry was placing his hand against Riddle's firm, *firm* chest and leaning forward, his shoulders touching Riddle's biceps as placed his head against Riddle's collar and breathed in his delectable scent.

"An-and..." Riddle stuttered, before quickly recovering. His voice was deeper, rougher the next second. "Apologies, Hepzibah. A moment, please."

He muted the phone (which he'd snatched away at some point) and glared at Harry. "What the *fuck* do you think *you're* —"

Riddle paused at the utterly glazed look on Harry's face.

Harry's eyes were fluttering shut in pleasure as he felt Riddle's low voice rumble beneath him, dangerously attractive and comforting all at once. He sighed, pressing his forehead to the nook of Riddle's shoulders before exhaling against his neck.

"I'm afraid I'll have to call you back," Riddle was telling Hepzibah now. His voice was strange and distant, a far cry from the friendly warmth he'd greeted her with.

And yet, it held a rough undertone of seductive warmth that made Harry shudder and sink further into Riddle's chest, tightening his legs on Riddle's waist and hooking them around the back of his boss's chair.

"Yes I will. Good *bye*, Miss Smith," Riddle said firmly, distantly, accidentally slipping back into formalities with her.

And then the phone was shut off.

Silence hung between them, tense and heated.

"Harry," Riddle said, quietly, his voice too calm and controlled to be genuine. "Get off."

That perfect facade... *oh*. It made Harry want to test his patience and shatter it to pieces.

"*Why?*" Harry murmured challengingly, lost and flustered and beyond reason. He breathed in, digging his nose into side of Riddle's neck until he decided that breathing him in wasn't enough. No, Harry needed to *taste* —

He bit down lightly at the junction between Riddle's neck and jawline, revelling in the addictive saltiness of his skin. He licked, nearly groaning at the soft velvety texture beneath his tongue, at

the fluttering pulse he wanted to capture as his *own*.

A shudder rippled through Riddle's body as it tensed, giving away all pretense of calm collectedness. And then moments later, Harry had been lifted from Riddle's lap and slammed back against a cool, wooden desk, his legs hitched upon Riddle's shoulders as the man leaned down over him.

Darkened, heated eyes gleamed down at him, elegant black curls falling over them as Riddle placed his thick arms on either side of Harry.

"*Harry...*" Riddle's low voice rumbled, "Do you know what you're even asking for?"

In response, Harry tightened his legs around Riddle's neck, bringing his boss's face down to his hips.

And then there was a sound outside of the door, and Harry snapped out of whatever trance he'd been in, sitting up and kicking Riddle away from him in a knee-jerk reaction.

"Hhh- *Harry!*" Riddle growled, holding his arms out in front of him. "What the *hell* —"

The door opened.

"Oh my," said a cool, amused voice. "Am I interrupting something?"

Thankfully, if anything, he and Riddle didn't look sexually suggestive in any manner. Riddle was in the corner of his own office, his arms still braced above him as though Harry had been kicking at him—

Oh.

Which he *had*.

Slowly, still sitting on Riddle's desk (upon which the papers were now spread out haphazardly, yikes), Harry turned back to face the man who had dared to enter Tom Riddle's office without permission.

And his jaw dropped.

Because the man who stood at the entrance, all lean limbs leaning against the door sill and soft amusement glittering from clear blue eyes, was the kind of person who radiated authority.

There was a steel determination in the way his arms were crossed, the way his thin lips fell into a line sharper than Harry's jaw. His hair was peppered with silver, perhaps one of the few indications that he was quite a bit *older* than Harry.

"Well, Tom," the older man murmured softly, his voice dripping with mirth, "I don't think I've ever seen your desk quite this messy."

And then the man looked at Harry, and though he never lost his calm smile, his eyebrows raised a little. "And you must be his lovely personal assistant?"

Harry's mind, already a bit scrambled from nearly kissing his boss... oh wait. He *did* do that. He'd bitten down on him too, holy shit, holy *shit*—

"Personal assistant, yes." Harry laughed nervously, not even daring to look at Riddle now. How embarrassing—meeting someone like this right before his imminent dismissal. "Lovely? You're

mistaken there.”

The older man laughed, and it was a very *pretty* laugh. The kind that made you feel like you’d said something endearing, that he was *charmed*.

And then he was walking forward, stepping into Riddle’s office like it was something he did every day.

“The pleasure is all mine,” the older man said, holding out a hand for Harry to shake. He paused, glancing between Riddle and Harry once more as if attempting to gauge the situation that had occurred before his entrance.

He leaned down, whispering loudly and conspiratorially. “And if Tom fires you, don’t worry—I’ll just re-hire you.” He winked, before tilting his head in question. “Or just make him hire you again? Whichever you prefer, darling.”

Harry felt his cheeks flush. He didn’t know whether to be insulted that this much, *much* older man had called him a pet name... or to feel flattered, like he was itching to do so.

Because oh *my*, what an absolute charmer. And with those looks to boot—

Wait.

Wait.

“Or just make him hire you again?”

Who *was* this man?

Harry turned back around, only to see a positively seething Tom Riddle staring back at the man.

“Flirting with men—employees— almost thirty years your junior?” Riddle intoned with disgust.

The older man’s mouth quirked upward in amusement. “Like father, like son.... I suppose.” He looked between Harry and Tom once more. “If I’m reading this correctly.”

Harry’s stomach dropped in instantaneous horror.

Father? Son?

No way. Not unless the older man was...

Riddle tensed, crossing his arms. It was the first time Harry had ever seen his boss look so defensive. “What are you doing here, sir?”

Tom Riddle Sr., CEO and chairman of the board of Morsmordre, spread his arms out besides himself. “Do I need a reason to visit you, son?”

Riddle clenched his jaw visibly. “ *Do not call me that,* ” he snarled, bleeding poison with every word that fell from his tongue.

Thomas continued to smile in that calm, collected way of his. “Then what should I call you? My *employee* ?” He gave a small chuckle at that, before growing much more serious. “At any rate, I don’t think canceling your meeting with me was very wise, hmm?”

Riddle rolled his eyes. “I never claimed to preach wisdom. Perhaps that is why you promoted

Dumbledore to COO instead of your own heir?" His eyes turned cold as he gave a frosty, returning smile of his own.

And in that moment, Harry saw the resemblance between them at its strongest.

The CEO was like a silver fox edition of Tom Riddle Jr., albeit a lot calmer. But the handsomeness, the charm, the big dick energy and sheer amount of dickery... oh, man. They were clearly very much related.

"Forgive his manners," Thomas said lightly, tossing a faint smile in Harry's direction. He was surprised the CEO still remembered he was still here. Hell, *Harry* had forgotten that he was here. "He was raised in an orphanage."

Harry's eyes widened. An *orphanage* ?

Then he shook his head, because surely—that had been a joke, right?

Riddle *hissed* at that, straightening up to his full height and stalking forward until he was toe-to-toe with his father.

"Just tell me what it is you came for and leave."

Harry tutted inwardly, feeling distinctly like he was watching some kind of soap opera. Riddle was definitely being disrespectful towards his father, but the CEO was also provoking him. He didn't know whose side he was even on at this point.

Meanwhile, Thomas had straightened up in response, not one to be outdone, Harry supposed. Really, in some matters, the Riddle men were quite predictable...

"I'd like you to travel back to England and personally meet with E. L. Thames." Thomas held out a folder to Riddle. "Here are her manuscripts for the sequel she's been writing—"

Riddle looked personally offended, holding the folder daintily by the tips of his fingers. "I don't even know who that *is* —"

"She's the author of *Fifty Shades of Purple*," Thomas raised an eyebrow. "You know—one of our top bestsellers from the fictional publishing departments."

Ah. No wonder Riddle hadn't recognized the author—he avoided the fictional departments like the plague.

Riddle narrowed his eyes at his father. "What I don't understand is, why are you sending *me*? I am not an *editor*—I'm the Vice President of this company, formerly head of Technology and Product Development. This isn't anywhere near my fields of expertise—"

Harry stared.

Was Riddle *insane* ?

Meeting a bestselling author, *any* bestselling author, was an opportunity Harry would die for, and Riddle was *giving it up* ?

Thomas chuckled softly. "Have you forgotten your very first job at this company?" He crossed his arms leisurely. "A fresh, green intern at the age of eighteen—and your first job here was as the intern of the retired, former Chief Editor Gellert Grindelwald."

The CEO looked Tom in the eye, his features growing serious. “Have you forgotten your passion for editing? For words?”

For words? Harry wondered at that. Riddle, who barely spoke at times except to bark out one-word orders like an illiterate caveman... had once enjoyed editing?

“Have you forgotten how it felt... becoming the Chief Editor of the S & F Department? Working directly with J. K. Roaring to edit the *James Evans* series, the leading fantasy book series to this date?”

Harry froze.

What?

WHAT?

Forget that Riddle had once been hired for his dream job. He’d *personally edited* J. K. Roaring’s work? Forget that—Riddle knew J. K. Roaring *personally* ?

Harry looked at Riddle incredulously, attempting to gauge the truth from his expression. But the man was as emotionless as a brick wall, the lines of his face wiped smooth.

“I am above all of that now,” he uttered simply.

“You cannot be *above* something you love.”

“Then it is no longer something I lo— *enjoy!* ” Riddle seethed, his hand thrusting forward as if to clutch at the other man’s collar before stopping itself.

Or rather, before it was stopped by another hand... resting upon his clenched fist.

The temperature in the room seemed to drop ten degrees as Thomas Riddle Sr. finally lost his charming smile, straightening up until he was eye-to-eye with his biological son.

“It seems you are mistaken, Tom Marvolo Riddle.” His blue eyes darkened chillingly, seeming to suck the warmth from Riddle’s office.

“I am not asking you as your father. I am *telling* you as the CEO of this company.” Thomas Sr.’s hand tightened on Riddle’s fist. “You will be going on that trip.”

He let go of Riddle’s fist unceremoniously, turning on his heel as he walked back towards the door.

“The plane tickets are already booked, car reservations have already been made. Everything is ready for you two—even the Manor and all of the household staff have been prepped—”

“The *Manor*.” Riddle spat poisonously. “I will not step a foot inside that place. I shall make my own hotel reservations—”

He paused, thinking.

“... Sir. ‘For you *two* ’?” Riddle demanded. He glanced sideways at Harry for the first time since his father had entered. “I travel alone. As always.”

“Not this time,” Thomas replied smoothly. “You’ll be training Harry on how to be a professional editor, fit to edit at Morsmordre.” He winked at him. “The boy’s been after that position for over a

year, now.”

“Since when do you know so much about my personal assistant?” Riddle questioned quietly, dangerously.

“Since I realized you hadn’t fired your current one for over a year.” Thomas smirked, looking at Harry more closely. “I’ll admit, I was curious. I did my research and looked over your portfolio, Harry Potter.”

He glanced back at Riddle. “And despite lacking credentials, the boy’s work... he has potential.”

One minute, Harry was shaking in fear of being caught in a compromising position by the CEO. The next? He was all the way up on cloud ninety-nine, trying to resist the urge to *preen* just because the CEO had complimented his editing work.

Harry barely paid attention as the Vice President and CEO finished up their conversation, Thomas Sr. leaving quickly soon after. He was too caught up in all of the details—the fact that Riddle had personally edited J. K. Rowling’s books? Unbelievable.

Illiterate caveman had the *audacity* to be some sort of prodigy at the one thing Harry had prided himself in. Editing and writing. Because of course he *had* to be, to have worked with Rowling of all authors.

And now, even more unbelievably—the CEO was giving him the chance to train under Riddle for his favorite job ever?

This was *insane*—

“Pack your bags tonight. Be at the airport by four o’clock sharp.”

Harry blinked. *Huh?*

His brain caught up with the present, and Harry jolted out of his trance.

“Wait—we’re headed to the U.K. *tomorrow* ?” he asked disbelievingly.

Riddle shot him a look of pure annoyance, his eyebrows furrowed upwards. “Were you not listening?”

“Well... uh... it got a bit *personal* in between—”

“The meeting with E. L. Thames is Monday morning,” Riddle interrupted, as if he hadn’t heard Harry. “And I have some... unfinished business to attend to, prior to that.”

Unfinished business?

Before Harry could ask for specifics that his boss would undoubtedly refuse to answer, Riddle was already by the door of his own office, slipping on that top hat of his that always made Harry cringe on the inside.

Ugh, didn’t those go out of fashion roughly fifty decades ago? A man who wore top-notch brands like *Twilfit and Tatting’s* had to know that much.

“Lock my office on the way out,” his boss said without a backwards glance.

And then without warning, Riddle was suddenly gone, leaving Harry and his questions behind.

It seemed he was always fated to have *unfinished business* with the man.

. . .

Maybe Harry really was slow. But between all the things that had happened today, from meeting the CEO to learning about Riddle's tumultuous relationship with him, it took a while for the fact that *he was going to motherfucking London* to really hit him.

"RON!" Harry yelled, running upstairs with a fresh load of laundry. "DID YOU SEE THE EXTRA PACK OF TOOTHBRUSHES FROM COSTCO?"

"HUH? I CAN'T HEAR YOU," yelled Ron, his volume barely overpowering the sounds of raucous cheering and football from the television that had been on *all night*.

"OI! TURN DOWN THE TV," Harry yelled back at the top of his lungs as he straight-up dumped his clean laundry into the open suitcase. Stuffing his Ziplock of toiletries into the front pocket, Harry slammed the top of his suitcase shut before painstakingly zipping it shut.

He dragged it down the stairs, unceremoniously dropping it near the front entrance, and clapped his hands together.

"THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, MATE!" Harry called out sarcastically.

"Anytime," Ron said at a normal tone, a mere few feet behind him.

Harry spun around in surprise. "Oh, good. Help me with the luggage, will you?"

Ron rolled his eyes. "And who's going to be helping you with it when I'm gone?"

"... Riddle?" Harry offered weakly.

Ron snorted, lifting one of Harry's suitcases with a hand. "I'm pretty sure it's going to be the other way around, but sure. I'll let you dream on a bit longer."

Harry exhaled as he lifted his other bag into the back of the car. "Well, I'll have you know. He's actually quite capable of being a gentleman when he wants too..."

Ron raised his eyebrows as Harry got his head out of the boot. "Are you really defending him?"

Harry was ashamed to say that he had to think about that before responding.

"*No!*" He crossed his arms as he situated himself in the front seat of their van. "Just pointing out that *despite* his ability to act half-way decent, Riddle still can't bother with any manners when it comes to his personal assistant."

He reached back to grab his phone from the front pocket of his backpack. "You know, a wise man," his godfather, Sirius Black, actually, "once said— 'If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.'"

Ron's eyebrows crept up his forehead in amusement. "Did you just acknowledge yourself as

Riddle's inferior?"

Harry's eye began to twitch in a manner it had never done so before.

"Ron," he said simply. "I am on the verge of suing you for blasphemy. You have the right to remain silent."

Ron smirked but fell quiet anyways as he began to focus on driving Harry to Sea-Tac Airport. In the comfortable silence that followed, Harry yawned sleepily and he unlocked his phone to scroll aimlessly through Discord, checking out all of the servers and posts he'd been tagged in.

He hadn't opened Discord for two weeks, ever since he'd left Lord_Voldemort_'s server. But now more than ever, he wished he'd stayed a little longer... if only to tie up all loose ends.

The way he'd left the server in the first place—announcing his author's pseud out of the blue, not waiting for any replies—had definitely been dramatic . And it had felt satisfying enough soon after.

But he still had so many questions. There were so many things Harry wished he wasn't curious about but *was* anyways.

Like Voldemort.

What did he think of LightningVolt? What had Voldemort said as soon as Harry had left?

Even now, part of him felt tempted to contact the author and end their correspondence on a more definitive note. His fingers hovered above the screen, as if thinking of what to type for him... but it was pointless anyways. It wasn't like Harry had *saved* Voldemort's Discord ID...

Ping!

Harry's eyes widened as he glanced at his screen, nearly dropping the phone.

He'd just received a direct message.

From Lord_Voldemort_.

Chapter End Notes

There's a new D A D D Y in the house, someone call 9-1-1 because it's cAtChing on fiRe.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Hahah, surprise! This chapter came out way earlier than I had anticipated, thanks to Ava's incredible support/beta-ing and all your comments—literally fueled me <333
Thank you, thank you so much! I hope you like this chapter.

He'd just received a direct message.

From Lord_Voldemort_.

Harry stared at his screen, brimming with confusion and bewilderment and—above all—*curiosity*. But right as he was about to open the chat, his phone began to buzz, his screen switching to show the familiar icon of his favorite colleague.

Harry frowned. Why was Hermione calling him?

“Is it Riddle?” Ron asked, continuing to keep his eyes on the road.

“No, a colleague,” Harry stated, before picking up the call. “Hey, Hermione.”

“Harry!” Hermione’s voice sounded, stressed and pitched higher than usual. “I came to work early today and... you left a folder titled ‘*For Trip*’ on your desk. I just want to make sure that isn’t important or anything—”

Harry’s stomach dropped.

“It is,” he said lowly, quietly, before his voice began to rise frantically. “Oh *shit*, Hermione, it *is*. That’s the whole itinerary for my fucking trip—”

“Harry!” Ron glanced at him sideways with concern. “What is it?”

Harry dug his fingers through his hair, pulling at his locks. “I forgot something important on my work desk.”

“Shit,” Ron and Hermione both said simultaneously, unheard by the other. In any other instance, Harry might have done a double take.

“Now what?” Ron bit his lip, glancing at the time. “We don’t exactly have time to rush back—”

“Riddle said to be there by four, right?” Hermione confirmed on the phone. “Your flight probably doesn’t leave for at least another two hours. I can drop it off to you! If I start now, I’ll arrive within half an hour.”

“Ah—Mione.” Harry slunk into his chair, letting out the breath he’d been holding. “Hermione, I owe you so so much—” He looked at Ron. “She’s coming to the airport.”

Ron exhaled deeply. “Well, okay. That’s great. You go ahead and drop off your luggage to that

escalator thing—”

“Did your friend just call the luggage drop-off an *escalator thing*?” Hermione intoned judgingly, her words heard only by Harry’s right ear.

“—and I’ll get the folder from—er—your colleague.”

“You said my name three times in the past two minutes and he still can’t remember it?” Hermione questioned, sounding more and more unimpressed by the second.

“Yes, Ron. That sounds great!” Harry stated loudly, ignoring Hermione’s comment and restraining the urge to tell them to both *behave* when they met.

Oh, hell. Harry blinked. They were going to *meet*. RoonilWazlib and HeadGirl were going to—

“We’re here, Harry,” Ron stated, getting out of the car. “Get yourself checked in and I’ll get the folder from Hermione.”

He clapped Harry’s back reassuringly once they were both out.

“You’ll be fine, mate.”

Checking into his flight? Not even an option.

“*Pack your bags tonight. Be at the airport by four o’clock sharp,*” his boss had said yesterday. He’d told Harry nothing else—no details about the flight, or where they would be staying every night. He hadn’t even given Harry his plane ticket.

And now, Riddle still wasn’t *here*.

Minutes later, Harry was calling him. He didn’t even know when the man was *coming*, because it was already half past four and he hadn’t gotten any texts—

A short, bushy-haired woman in black pumps and impeccable office attire came into view. His *savior*. Harry could almost see a faint halo around her.

“Harry!” Hermione called out, waving the folder above her.

“Wow, she got here *fast*, ” Ron muttered under his breath, whistling and looking impressed.

Harry jumped up, walking towards her with Ron in tow. “Great! Thanks, Mione.” He checked the time on his phone, frowning in thought. Clearly, he had some time before his flight boarded, whenever that was, because Riddle hadn’t even called him back yet.

Either that, an inner voice muttered, or he’s planning on leaving you at the airport—

Harry turned back towards his friends, smiling brightly. “Coffee on me, guys?” he offered, because he was here as demanded and really needed something to distract from his growing worry.

And that was how the three of them, finally united, ended up sitting at a coffee table in Starbucks.

Hermione, who had been talking on and on about work and giving Harry a bunch of editing advice, fell quiet once Ron came back with their drinks.

Awkward silence.

Maybe it was just his imagination, but Harry could feel a weird sort of tension between his friends already.

Should he tell them about the whole Discord—?

Nope. Harry sipped at his chai, perfectly content to just remain in silence as long as he was sitting next to his two best friends.

“So,” Ron cleared his throat, looking at Hermione. “I’m Ron Weasley, Harry’s roommate.”

Hermione raised her eyebrows before offering her hand to shake. “Hermione Granger. *Pleasure.*” Although her tone of voice really tested the honesty of her sentiments.

Right as Ron was about to take her hand, she took her hand away, staring at Ron’s face with an unnerving intensity.

“... What?”

Hermione’s lips were pursed. “You’ve got a bit of coffee on your nose.”

“Have I?” Ron repeated, before proceeding to rub his nose in a most unseemly manner. Harry winced. “Better?”

Hermione stared. “Not really, no.”

“Alright!” Harry abruptly clapped his hands together, drawing attention to himself before things could get worse. “Well, I am definitely excited for this trip. One of our hotels for the night will be right next to a major poetry slam event.”

Hermione’s eyes widened with interest. “Oh, Harry! That’s wonderful! Have you written anything?”

Harry grinned, shrugging. “Not yet, but you know me. I’ll have something in the nick of time.” He raised his eyebrows at Hermione. “As Ron once put it, I’m a ‘procrastinating fanfiction-obsessed human disaster.’”

Immediately after saying that, Harry froze. Mentioning fanfiction probably hadn’t been the best idea.

Fortunately, neither of his friends seemed to notice anything out of the ordinary. Ron snorted into his coffee. Hermione gave a bark of laughter, her shoulders shaking in sync.

“Truer words never spoken.” She raised her coffee cup in Ron’s direction as if saluting him.

“I like to think I have a way with words,” Ron said smugly, looking down to observe his finger nails nonchalantly. Harry hadn’t seen him do that a day in his life. “After all, I write... poetry as well.”

Hermione looked at him with obvious, somewhat condescending surprise. “Oh?”

Harry shook his head frantically, but Ron didn’t seem to notice his warning. Instead, he began to straighten up, puffing his chest outwards.

Harry tensed up in worry, looking between his roommate and colleague.

Ron had dabbled in poetry once, long ago, taking a poetry-writing class in college with Harry. And he'd done great. His poetry wasn't always the *best*, technically speaking. But it came from his heart, just like everything he wrote.

Hermione would *destroy* him.

In fact, judging by the look on her face, she was waiting to do exactly that.

But, knowing how his best mate's mind worked, Harry knew that all Ron could see was a pretty face looking up at him, saying, "*Read me poetry, darling.*"

"Yeah." Ron sheepishly rubbed the back of his rapidly flushing neck. "A little something about my pet."

Hermione leaned her chin upon her hands, fingers crossed together. "Well, let's hear it then."

Ron cleared his throat and began.

"Sunshine. Daisies. Buttermellow. My pet rat is bright and yellow."

He finished and looked up at Hermione expectantly.

After a moment—

"That's *it*?" Hermione questioned incredulously. She gave a quiet, unkind laugh. "Well, it's not very good, is it?"

She shook her head. "Goodness, it sounded like a *nursery rhyme*. And even if you wanted to get this published... why write about a pet *rat* of all things? Perhaps choose something the audience will relate to more... like a pet *cat*."

Ron's face was turning redder by the second. "The point of reciting my own written poetry certainly wasn't to get *published* —"

"Then why else would you recite such horrid writing to an *editor* such as myself—"

Harry's phone rang, saving the day.

"It's Riddle!" he exclaimed, immediately grabbing everyone's attention as he swiped to accept.

"Yes, sir! Where are you?"

"Why," Riddle spoke at a dangerously low pitch, his voice thick with sleep, "are you calling me at bloody *four* in the morning?"

Harry shot to his feet.

"Did I just wake you up?" He put his hand on his hip incredulously, "Are you seriously not *here* yet? You told me to be here at four o'clock sharp. Do you have no *respect* for my time?"

There was a silence on the line, nothing save for ragged breathing on either side. Hermione and Ron were looking at him worriedly.

And then,

"Harry," Riddle said quietly, his British accent more pronounced than ever. "Our flight is at six in the *bloody evening*."

What?

Riddle only liked to board *morning* flights. Harry had booked flights for him countless times and knew all of his flying preferences, despite never having traveled with the man himself.

But—oh. Riddle hadn't directed the booking of these tickets, had he? They'd already been booked.

He closed his eyes, restraining the urge to pour his chai over someone, *anyone* who looked even remotely like his boss in this coffee shop.

"Oh my god," Harry breathed in shock. "You didn't *tell me*—"

The line went silent.

Harry was *furious*.

He couldn't see *straight*, he was so mad. Anger, hot and heavy, licked down his spine.

As he clicked his phone shut, he looked back to see his friends staring at him, no doubt having heard his conversation from start to end.

"Well," Ron began brightly. "Just... ah... have fun at the airport for a bit, I guess." He looked at Hermione. "We'll just head out."

"Yes," Hermione echoed cheerfully. "At least we know you won't be missing your plane flight."

"Yeah, I'll just go find a sofa near the check-in area and chill." Harry muttered irritably, briefly side-hugging his friends and accepting their best wishes before proceeding to do just that.

.

Once he'd found a comfortable place to waste the rest of his day, Harry sank into one of the chairs with a tired sigh and began swiping through his phone apps.

What was he possibly going to do for ten hours—

His gaze landed on the Discord app, and he instantly remembered.

Voldemort.

Without a second thought, Harry tapped on the app and viewed the man's message. His heart rate quickened rapidly, and he could practically taste his own anticipation as he began to read.

>> Lord_Voldemort_: Greatness inspires envy. Envy engenders spite. Spite spawns lies.

Harry stared at the message in consternation.

No, "Hi there, I'm Voldemort" (which, knowing what he did about the man, Harry really hadn't expected in the first place). But this... strange piece of philosophy? He didn't know what to make of it.

>> **lightning_boi:** wut?

He received a response a few minutes later.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** My most loyal followers—they were jealous of you. It is only natural.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** No one else has ever dared to be Internet-shipped with me.

Wow. Okay, *wow*. Talk about an entitled self-image.

Harry exhaled hysterically, not sure where to start.

>> **lightning_boi:** “Hello, Lord Voldemort! It’s good to connect! I’m a huge fan!”

>> **lightning_boi:** That’s roughly how I imagined our first actual discussion going.

>> **lightning_boi:** “lightning_boi holds no importance to me. You may as well stop wasting time debasing him.”

>> **lightning_boi:** ^^ This message you sent? This ruined it all for me. Screw your theories on human nature, and your fake-ass attempt at not-apologizing.

>> **lightning_boi:** Good bye, again.

Harry was about to exit out, thoroughly satisfied that he’d gotten to say what had been stewing in his head for ages. But then a series of pings came from his recently unmuted Discord app, drawing his gaze to the screen before he could shut it.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** You misunderstand.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I am trying to make amends here.

Harry raised his eyebrows in disbelief.

>> **lightning_boi:** Oh, that’s okay. I don’t need your excuses. :))))

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** It would be in your best interest to listen.

Harry steamed at that, indignance coursing through his veins.

In *his* best interests? Oh, the sheer arrogance. What did a stranger online possibly know about Harry’s best interests?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** *Greatness inspires envy.* They were envious... envious of how far *superior* you are to them.

Harry froze, completely caught off-guard.

What the fuck.

He huffed in disbelief, typing back.

>> **lightning_boi:** Oh please.

>> **lightning_boi:** I can smell your bullshit over the Internet. Are you joking?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I don't joke.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I rarely read first person works, simply because I cannot stand the protagonists. But your stories are some of the most refreshing first person perspective pieces of fiction I have ever read.

Harry pressed a hand to his thumping chest. *Stories*, plural?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Instead of reading like a monotonous trail of thoughts, they read... rather like a *diary*.

Had I been blind all these years?

Had Padfoot always been this rash, immature, stubborn... this cruel?

He was staring back at me, paying attention to me for the first time since he'd entered the arena. And like clockwork, I found himself clinging to that attention, wanting those piercing gray eyes to stay on me despite hating myself for it.

This—this attention. Was this perhaps the reason I'd been so blind? Seeking a parental figure's attention, my own godfather's attention... all the while remaining completely blind to the man's true nature?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: This.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Your protagonists—unlike most—always demonstrate excellent self-awareness and metacognition.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: You have a way of expressing a character's inner turmoil that is so delicious. With every word, you expose their innermost insecurities and deepest desires.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: It gives the reader a heady sense of... *power*.

Harry suppressed a shudder. Because the way Voldemort had described interacting with his work had sounded so... intimate?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: And your other work— *boss from hell* .

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Comedic brilliance and compelling characterization, wrapped in layers of mouthwatering unresolved sexual tension.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Your writing style is gritty, unique. Emotional and *evocative* in a way most writers cannot achieve their entire lives.

Harry curled into himself, shivering in his sweater.

He had a way with words?

Voldemort made everything sound like *dessert*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: You captured the push-and-pull dynamics between the protagonist and his boss so well. I could feel the genuinity. It comes as no surprise to see that your work has such an impressive following.

Harry stared, still somewhat disgruntled but mostly, begrudgingly charmed.

Because Lord_Voldemort_ was an absolute *charmer* towards his fans. Unthinkably suave and persuasive. No wonder they were so loyal to him... despite being such savages.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I look forward to more. ;]

And holy *shit*, there it was. The legendary, signature smirk-face that made Harry and the entire Jarvolo fandom flip out.

>> **lightning_boi**: thank you, wow. Thank you so much.

Forgiven. Lord Voldemort was forgiven.

Because that was, perhaps, the most magnificent apology Harry had ever received. Despite the fact that the other man had not said ‘*Sorry*’ even once.

Harry’s mouth quirked in amusement. How sneaky of him.

But then he stared at the message he’d sent, biting his lip in contemplation. His simple thanks seemed rather insufficient, but he just didn’t know how else to respond. He was flattered beyond measure, confused, and a bit overwhelmed because this was all so sudden.

One thing was certain, though. He was finally beginning to understand the power he had—sitting here conversing with *the* Lord Voldemort.

So he began to ask the man questions.

>> **lightning_boi**: If you don’t mind me asking... what other Jarvolo works have you enjoyed recently?

Harry winced, feeling his own awkwardness in the message.

But it seemed Lord Voldemort wasn’t quite ready to give up on him yet.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: The majority of my reading and writing has been gen-focused. I only got into the Jarvolo fandom recently.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Obviously, I’ve read many of the main ones. *A Dangerous Game* by Cybrid, *Aconitum* by VivvyPotter, *I Will Possess Your Heart* by Leontina, and *The Root of All Evil is Love* by Crystia... to name a few.

Oooh. Good taste, as expected from Lord Voldemort.

Harry smiled at his phone, leaning his head against his backpack as he continued to read.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: TanninTele’s *The Matchmaker* is an underrated favorite of mine — a delicious and somehow fitting reversal of the villain-hero roles.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: But—

Lord_Voldemort_ is typing...

Harry leaned forward, buzzing with anticipation as he waited for the man’s next message.

He chuckled softly, shaking his head. The man liked to keep his readers in suspense even when it

was a matter of simple direct messaging.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Well, my tastes tend to run rather... dark.

Harry's eyebrows rose at that. But before he could ask further, he received another ping.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Perhaps you could recommend something, seeing as I'm quite new to this pairing?

>> **Lord_Voldemort**: Though I must warn you, I'm quite picky... and I will *not* hesitate to reject your recommendations if they do not meet my tastes.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Think of this is a test, even.

Harry let out a sound of amusement, imagining he could hear a responding soft chuckle on the other side of the line.

Challenge accepted.

Harry leaned back on the airport chair, running a hand through his flyaways. Man, there were so many works he loved and could think of on the spot, it was like he read fanfiction for a *living* (if only he actually could).

>> **lightning_boi**: Well, surely you've read *Eternal Hilarity* by Luxis?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I don't believe so.

Harry sent him the link. Because, oh *Lord*, this was one of his favorite fics and the man had better appreciate the author's knack for pure comedic fluffiness—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Oh.

That... didn't sound promising.

>> **lightning_boi**: You've read it?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Only the summary. But as I mentioned, I'm quite particular about what I read.

Harry frowned. What was wrong with the *summary* ?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: On principle, I don't read Master of Death James fics. Or Soulmate AUs—not unless they are done exceptionally well.

Harry gasped.

>> **lightning_boi**: You don't like MoD James fics? Those are the *best ones*. BAMF James is the bomb.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I personally find it such a turn-off when the Boy Who Lived is as or more powerful than Lord Slytherin.

>> **lightning_boi**: Seriously? You're missing out on so many good fanfics!

>> **lightning_boi**: And not liking Soulmate AUs?

>> **lightning_boi:** *Your Name on My Heart* by whitedandelions? *And Six Seconds* by Acnara? How can you *not* have read these within six seconds of joining the Jarvolo fandom?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** ...Those happen to be exceptions.

Oh thank the *Lord*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** But generally, the concept that one is destined to be with only one person in the world...

>> **lightning_boi:** It's so *romantic*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** It's *ridiculous*. Suffocating. And depressing. So much could go wrong —

>> **lightning_boi:** But so much could go right!

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** They could be mortal enemies, not knowing they are each other's soulmates until it's too late—

>> **lightning_boi:** Which only makes it all the more delicious when they realize they are! And the angst factor? *Yessss*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:**

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Are you always this optimistic?

>> **lightning_boi:** Love is supposed to be messy :)

>> **lightning_boi:** I love works that are filled with misunderstandings and miscommunication (hidden identities are the bEsT), because then it's so much sweeter when the couple inevitably ends up together in the end.

>> **lightning_boi:** <33333

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** ... Inevitably?

>> **lightning_boi:** ...yes. Yes. Happy endings are a necessity.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Ah.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** It is becoming clearer to me by the second how much our tastes differ.

Harry paused, thinking, drumming his fingers against the back of his phone cover.

>> **lightning_boi:** Well, then, Mr. Too-Vanilla-For-Me...

>> **lightning_boi:** Have you read any of Katsitting's works?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** ...possibly. I'm pretty bad with names.

Without further ado, Harry sent him a few links to her stories.

Twenty minutes later—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Oh

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** *Interesting. Very well-written and unique.*

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:**

Something wrenched in his stomach, petrified and noxious at the same time he saw Slytherin move and turn.

Slytherin was—

James gagged, his eyes fluttering shut for a moment to brace himself, to find the strength he didn't possess. Slytherin was monstrous, deformed. There was no word in the English language that could describe just what Slytherin was.

>> **lightning_boi:** Ahh I love *Primeval*! God, that fic gives me chills every time

>> **lightning_boi:** I just reread it and

>> **lightning_boi:** my heart is pounding so fast right now. I can't get over how deliciously dark and terrifying and seductive this is. Every time I read it.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** So you like Monster Slytherin?

>> **lightning_boi:** Ohhhh yes. I like scary men, hahahaha

Harry snorted as an image of his scowling boss came to mind, unbidden.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I prefer it when Lord Slytherin retains his mental facilities, but this was quite the horror piece. I liked it.

Something fluttered in Harry's stomach at receiving the other man's approval.

>> **lightning_boi:** Well if you liked that, wait until you read her *Priest James AU*...

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Oh?

And so they continued like that, with Harry and Voldemort taking recommendations from each other, reading them instantaneously and gushing about them.

Well, the gushing was more on *his* part. Voldemort just gave a subtle "hmm" of approval followed by a comment or two when he liked Harry's recs.

Harry was buzzing with excitement, with the energy that reading incredible fanfic usually gave him. Though he read the occasional dark fic (whenever he fell in love with an author, usually), Harry had always read more Marvolo Gaunt/James Evans than Lord Slytherin/James Evans in the past. This had resulted in him often turning to lighter works with Time Travel tropes and Same Age AUs and Fluff and Crack.

And then Lord_Voldemort_, perhaps one of the only horror writers whom Harry consistently followed, had gone and completely turned him to the Dark side.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Did you enjoy them?

>> **lightning_boi:** JAIELT:JRPOELJTWY"EO"PQ20I@(#\$UTY

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I'll take that as a "yes, my Lord."

>> **lightning_boi**: OH

>> **lightning_boi**: MY

>> **lightning_boi**: LORD

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: ...I'm listening.

>> **lightning_boi**: exarite's *Prison Blues* was absolutely *incredible*. The coercion... the power imbalance...

>> **lightning_boi**: You're corrupting what remains of my sweet vanilla sensibilities with all these dark works, I'm *never* going to recover :sob:

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Oh, darling, you think these are dark?

Darling ? Harry's heart skipped a beat at the pet name, perhaps typed out unthinkingly.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: How... open are you?

Harry hesitated before typing out a message.

>> **lightning_boi**: I don't have any severe triggers, if that's what you're asking.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Hmm, good.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: How do you feel about torture?

Harry raised his eyebrows at the question. That certainly wasn't a question he got asked everyday.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Because there is this fanfiction, *nevermind the end* by slexelskee...

Half an hour later, Harry was curled up in a corner of sitting area with another Starbucks drink, trying and failing not to openly sob. By the way some of the kids from a neighboring family were watching, he definitely hadn't succeeded.

>> **lightning_boi**: I was

>> **lightning_boi**: so not prepared for that

>> **lightning_boi**: *How can authors torture James like this?* All that torture and cruelty and then—somehow consensual male pregnancy and then—in the end, they're having a nice little family breakfast together?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Nevermind the end — did you like it?

Harry nearly snorted out loud at that.

>> **lightning_boi**: I see what you did there.

He paused, thinking back on the fanfic.

He wished he could whisper on Discord, because that was certainly how he would have said his

next few messages.

>> **lightning_boi:** yes, I did like it.

>> **lightning_boi:** *I loved it.*

Harry exhaled slowly, before continuing.

>> **lightning_boi:** The cum play, exhibitionism, the rough sex at the beginning vs. how it began to change when they developed feelings for each other... *oh.*

>> **lightning_boi:** It was so *hot.*

Harry swallowed as he sent his last message, waiting.

The chat remained silent.

And then—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I'm glad you liked it.

Simple, distant, impersonal. Harry visibly deflated at the message. Of course, he shouldn't have expected anything different. The man played hot and cold better than Katy Perry.

Sighing, Harry brought his cup to his mouth, taking another sip—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I climax every time I read the Love Potion scene.

—and spat his hot chocolate out. All over himself.

No flight necessary. Harry's jaw had fallen straight through the earth's core to London.

He was speechless. Because until now, despite his glorious writing, Lord Voldemort had been a faceless, somewhat unknown entity... somewhere between God and bot. But after chatting with him for so long, seeing him *say* that was like...

Harry shuddered, something strange and warm curling in the pit of his stomach as he looked back down at the chat.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I have to leave now.

Harry stared, whiplashed to the point of incomprehension.

What?

He couldn't just drop a *bomb* like that and leave. God, Voldemort was some kind of mastermind terrorist... terrorizing Harry's *sanity*....

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** But perhaps we can message later?

Harry's heart skipped a beat. He smiled warmly to himself.

>> **lightning_boi:** Absolutely.

For that matter, Harry probably had to leave soon too...

He checked the time, double-taking in surprise. It was already *three o'clock* in the afternoon. He'd spent hours talking to Voldemort.

With an hour left until boarding began, Harry was surprised Riddle hadn't called him yet—

Ring! Ring!

He picked up.

"Sir," Harry greeted, looking at the board for his gate. "Already here. Early."

"That's a first," said a low voice right behind him, making Harry spin around.

Tom Riddle was standing behind him, his hand still holding up the phone that had called Harry. He was wearing business casual attire—a white shirt and gray, cashmere sweater that should have made him look about a seventy-two-years old but only flattered his *damn fine* figure instead—

"What did you *do* to yourself?" Riddle asked as he came closer, staring down at Harry's figure in disgust. "Are you twelve?"

Harry looked down at himself, and sure enough, hot chocolate was dripping from his clothes down to the floor from when he'd spat out his drink earlier.

Immediately, he scrambled for the napkins in his bag and began to rapidly and roughly clean himself off.

"Ugh, just—" Riddle put a hand to his forehead, turning away as he wrinkled his nose in distaste. How the man looked attractive even while making such an ugly expression, Harry would never understand. "Just go do that in the bathroom. And *hurry*. Boarding starts soon."

. . .

Whoa. Business class. Hell, *planes*. So cool.

Sitting on the cushioned black seat, Harry watched the mini-screen on the back of the seat in front of him as it played *American Airlines'* safety video.

Riddle, who had been looking outside from the window seat the entire time, continued to actively not look at Harry. Strange, it was like he'd been avoiding Harry for some reason. If anything, *he* should have been the one avoiding Riddle, given his earlier mistreatment.

Harry began to mess around with his seat for a bit.

"Sir, look," Harry grinned as he pushed a certain button that caused his seat to move back, "I'm *reclining*..."

Still looking out of the window, Riddle muttered sharply, "Stop. You're embarrassing me." His mouth curled in annoyance. "It's as if you've never flown before."

Harry remained silent, stopping momentarily before continuing to recline his seat.

"... I see," Riddle's eyes finally flashed in Harry's direction for the first time since they'd boarded.

“You’ve just lived here your entire life?”

Harry stopped messing with his chair’s settings. “Yup. Born and raised in the Seattle area.”

“College?”

“University of Washington,” Harry shot back, looking at Riddle with raised eyebrows. “Haven’t you seen my resume?”

“Never bothered,” Riddle replied, his body shifting to face forward instead of leaning in the opposite direction of Harry. “Narcissa hired you, and I didn’t think you’d stick around for so long. By the time you had, I didn’t care to look at it.”

Harry huffed, not sure whether to feel insulted or amused.

Right then, a flight attendant came up to them. “Mr. Riddle, yes? Your request for an upgrade has been approved—please follow me.”

An upgrade from *this* ?

Riddle stood up, grabbing both of their bags before Harry could blink. Harry unbuckled his belt quickly, standing in the aisle to let his boss step out first before following him and the attendant to the front of the plane... to the completely empty, jaw-droppingly luxurious *first-class cabin*.

Oh, damn, Harry’s first flying experience was going to ruin all flying for him.

There was nothing to recline here. The cabin contained two comfortable-looking, twin-sized *beds*, separated by a foot-wide armrest with cupholders in it.

It was a barrier that only gave Riddle all the more faculty to silently avoid him.

As the plane took off, the older man got out his laptop and began to go through the contents of a two-hundred-page Word document.

A few hours later, Harry had watched a movie, gotten a drink, played Scramble (with himself), and was about ready to resign himself to a fully conversation-less rest of his nine-hour flight to London.

Sighing quietly, Harry began to play the movie’s sequel— *James Evans and the Chamber of Secrets* (damn, young Christian Coulson made a spectacular Marvolo Gaunt)—while intermittently observing his companion in the window seat.

Harry had nothing better to do. He was curious. Bored.

Riddle, it seemed, was neither of those things.

The older man was pouring rapidly over the Word document, marking it up with brutal efficiency. His face would twitch oddly every now and then. In fact, it seemed Riddle had started to pick up strange new habits in the past few hours—such as running a hand through his locks and messing up his usually elegant curls, tugging somewhat harder than necessary.

He had ordered wine at one point, and the glass was already half-empty. *Odd* . Harry had never imagined his boss being much of a drinker—

Suddenly, Riddle was coughing, spilling droplets of wine on his lap. And then he was clutching his head in visible pain, glaring back down at the documents like they had committed a sin.

Harry pounded his boss on the back, instantly handing him the napkins he'd stocked up on from Starbucks earlier.

He tsked teasingly. "Now who's the twelve-year-old, *sir* —"

"Harry," Riddle said in a strangled voice. "Have you read *Fifty Shades of Purple*?"

Harry blinked at the sudden change of topic before slowly shaking his head. *Nope*, only thing he read these days was fanfiction.

Riddle handed him his own laptop in a *get-this-thing-away-from-me* sort of manner. "Read this."

Harry did, with Riddle breathing down his neck, looking over his shoulder. He got through the first few chapters, and then—

Oh, *man*.

His eyes went wide.

"Now I know what all the fuss is about. Two orgasms—coming apart at the seams, like the spin cycle on a washing machine."

Oh, *Lord*.

"I had no idea giving pleasure could be such a turn-on, watching him writhe subtly with carnal longing. My inner goddess is doing the merengue with some salsa moves."

Inner goddess? *What the fuck?* Harry could barely breathe; he was too busy trying to suppress his laughter so that he didn't wake any of sleeping occupants on the other side of the plane—

Harry stopped, slowly turning to look at Riddle.

Because, this whole time, Riddle had been reading *smut* next to him?

"Focus, Harry," Riddle said firmly. "Let's get done with this."

Before Harry knew it, he was reading the document along with Riddle, editing the Word document chapter-by-chapter while discussing it with him.

"Mentally girding my loins, I headed into the hotel," Harry read out loud incredulously. "The woman's about to have *sex*, not go to war."

Riddle snorted. "It gets worse." He adopted a slightly shriller voice than usual. "*My flan-mounds were at war with his meatstick.*"

He looked ill just from reading it, and quite frankly, Harry didn't blame him.

"Yeah, I'm never eating flan again." Harry ran a hand through his locks—really, no wonder Riddle had been doing that so often. "This protagonist is really getting on my nerves."

"At least she has an excuse."

Harry looked at him incredulously. "What excuse?"

Riddle shrugged, loosening his tie. He'd lost his sweater at some point. "She's incurably stupid." Ignoring Harry's glare, he pointed a few paragraphs down and continued. "But the *man*—I'm

thoroughly disappointed in him. No self-respecting CEO would act like this—propositioning an incompetent stranger after the first meeting.”

Harry scoffed. “She’s not *stupid*. ” And suddenly, he had no idea why, but he was *defending* the stupid heroine. “The man’s an incredibly powerful, wealthy, and influential executive officer. Maybe she felt like she *had* to accept his contract or face consequences.”

Riddle raised his eyebrows. “Oh, if she’d felt like that, I’m positive her inner goddess wouldn’t have been egging her on the entire time.”

The corner of Harry’s mouth curled upwards against his will.

They continued to edit over the next few hours, and pretty soon, Harry was right there with Riddle, gripping his forehead agitatedly.

“This is shit,” he exclaimed breathlessly after laughing over yet another *washing machine* reference. “Oh my freaking *god*. I write better romance than this.”

Riddle’s eyes flickered unreadably at Harry’s words, before he casually said, “ *I* would write better romance than this.”

Harry snorted, turning to face Riddle. “Oh, please. You don’t have a romantic bone in your body.”

Riddle raised an eyebrow in amusement, the corners of his mouth tipping in a wry smile. “My point exactly,” and at this, Harry couldn’t stop the laughter that erupted from his mouth.

And then he was looking at Riddle, *really* looking at him.

Somehow, seeing his boss like this—ruffled hair, missing tie, the top few buttons of his shirt undone—made him catch his breath. Harry didn’t feel that vicious satisfaction that he might have felt days ago at seeing his boss so unkempt. Instead, there was only the buzzing realization that, *wow, Riddle was even hotter like this*.

“I can’t get over the BDSM scenes,” Riddle was shaking his head disapprovingly. “So *unrealistic*. ”

Harry let out another huff of laughter, smirking at Riddle tauntingly. “And how would you know?”

And suddenly, the atmosphere seemed to thicken with tension.

Riddle tilted his head, his eyes darkening and falling half-shut.

“Christian Grey is far too selfish and impatient to make a competent Dom, let alone experience the true joys of BDSM.”

Riddle leaned forward on the shared armrest between them, looking straight at Harry. And when he spoke, his voice was low, quiet, and heart-stoppingly seductive.

“Had I been holding my partner captive contractually, I would have kept them chained to my bed for *hours*. I would have used all manner of toys on them until they were left begging for more.”

Riddle smiled slowly, his hooded gaze heated.

“And only after edging my partner for hours on end would I, being a merciful master, allow them to come.”

Harry stared back at him, mouth slightly open. It took him a moment to get his bearings back, but when he did, something strange and familiar had uncurred him... the very same feeling that had struck him back in Riddle's office...

"That's it?" Harry breathed challengingly, his lashes lowered unconsciously.

At that, Riddle gave Harry a distinctly odd look, shocking Harry out of his trance.

He scrambled to amend his statement. "I mean, come on, *details*, boss. We practically have to re-write this scene," Harry trailed off with nervous laughter, and Riddle was back to being his impassive, business-like self as he proceeded to read the next part.

"... *You're going to unman me, Ana...*"

Riddle paused, looking extremely pained.

"Delete this entire scene," he uttered, and Harry, holding back laughter, did exactly that.

.

After editing, sleeping, and editing some more, they reached London around noon.

"Wow," Harry murmured as he looked outside the large wall of windows. The sky was gray and cloudy, rather nondescript, and tall buildings were visible in the distance.

"Do you like it?" Riddle asked, checking their documents as they went to stand in line.

"It's like another America," Harry said, provoking glares from a couple of passerbyers. "But with shittier weather." He turned to look at his boss. "I'm excited. How far away is the Manor from here again—"

"We are not going there," Riddle said abruptly. "We will be checking into a hotel near the Diagon Alley Writers Conference, the one we're scheduled to attend tomorrow." He checked his watch. "However, our check-in time is at one—we need to hurry."

They breezed through security and car rental, and before long, they were parked outside of Hilton hotel, carrying their luggage inside using the golden rack provided to them.

"Unfortunately, this is the best I could book us within a day's notice," Riddle said as he hefted the last of their luggage onto the rack, primly gesturing for Harry to push it. "I will be out running some errands. You may find the room and settle in as you need, but leave the bed farther from the entrance for me."

"We're sharing a room?" Harry asked, looking back at his boss in surprise.

Riddle's jaw ticked. "Like I said—there were few vacancies left in the good hotels of this area. Now, stay here. I'll check us in." He began walking towards the front desk.

Half a minute later, chaos had erupted at the front desk.

"*What do you mean* you gave our spot away?" Riddle seethed, his eyes darkened with fury and his jaw clenched. "We are twenty-five minutes early."

“Sir, we’ve had so many walk-ins this past week. It’s summer hols for many at this time of the year, and your reservation was one of the last we gave up.” The woman—Marie Malkins, by the looks of her nametag—looked at him pleadingly. “I’m sorry, but we simply cannot accommodate —”

“Where’s your manager? I could *sue* you for this.” Riddle scowled, crossing his arms.

“Bloody Americans,” muttered a low voice standing in line behind both of them. “Always threatening to sue over everything that happens to them.”

Oh, no.

Riddle turned around, giving the man a death glare.

“Mr. Riddle, sir,” Harry interrupted with enthusiasm, lightly setting a hand his boss’s upper arm. “Er—let’s just go somewhere else.” He tossed his own glare at the man behind them, who was wearing a shiny name tag that implied he was *also* faculty—huh, how *rude* he’d been. “Let’s not waste our precious time here.”

Waste our precious time? Harry ran silently over his tongue again as they were exiting the building.

Heh, Riddle had definitely rubbed off on him.

“There’s an inn two streets down that should have vacancies,” Malkin called out to them as they were leaving. Harry didn’t turn back, but he could have sworn he’d heard snickering from the hotel man besides her.

After loading their luggage back inside, they returned to the car and began looking up alternatives.

Tom’s hands clenched around the driver’s wheel. “The *nerve* .” His upper arm muscles tightened as he shifted the gear. “I have errands to run, I don’t have time for this nonsense.”

“Let’s try the inn nearby.” Harry showed him his phone. “The nearest hotel is twenty minutes away, and it’ll take at least half an hour in this traffic.”

And so, to the inn two streets down, they went.

Amortentia Inn.

It was small, shabby, its brick walls clearly eroded over the years. Even in comparison to the shady neighborhood sharing its street, the motel was easily one of the more decrepit buildings there. How much the atmosphere of London could differ from street to street, Harry would never be able to understand.

“No wonder that lady mentioned that there would be vacancies here,” Harry muttered. “I would be surprised if there were any occupants at all.”

Harry turned to look at his boss, only to find him putting the keys back in starting up the car again.

“Whoa, whoa,” Harry splayed an arm out. “Hey, *chill*— ”

Riddle’s voice went eerily calm. “Did you just—”

“With all due respect, sir,” Harry interrupted, and *damn*, being in the U.K. was already bringing out a posher side of himself. “It’s one night. What could possibly happen?”

He sighed, leaning back in his seat as he maintained eye contact with the man. “And don’t you have somewhere to be?”

Harry’s hand crept towards the door handle of the car, opening it slowly before Riddle caught on. “Just leave the luggage with me. I’ll get us a room and let you know which one we’re in.” He got out of the car, removing the luggage from the boot before saluting his boss. “Call me when you’re on your way back.”

Once he had everything outside of the motel’s entrance, he waved to Riddle—who was still staring at him from the driver’s seat, looking at him through the passenger seat’s open window.

“I’m trusting you,” Riddle said sternly, his mouth frowning to show his displeasure at the thought.

“Good choice,” he replied, sending his boss a thumbs-up.

And as the black Bentley drove away, Harry muttered under his breath. “About *time*. ”

Because, in all honesty, it was a lack of faith that made their relationship so strained in the first place. It was probably what had gotten every one of his previous personal assistants fired as well. Distrusting as always, Riddle often woke up at ass o’clock in the morning to redo the work of his subordinates himself. He didn’t trust his own assistants with flight information, so kept the information to himself.

And then, of course, he yelled at them for doing and knowing nothing.

Classic Riddle.

Rolling his eyes to himself, Harry entered *Amortentia Inn* without further delay .

A tall, dark-haired, pretty lady with light blue eyes looked up at him from the front desk as he arrived. Her name tag read, “Romilda Vane,” and a box of customary chocolates had been placed on the shelf.

“Hello!” She smiled brightly, giving a little wave. “Did you have a reservation?”

“No,” Harry rubbed the back of his neck. “But I only need a room for tonight.”

She gazed at him with an almost predatory look. “Just a... single?”

“No, sorry,” Harry shook his head, blinking. What the hell was wrong with him? Something about the hazy atmosphere and pink decor (which reminded him almost revoltingly of his tenth grade P.E. teacher, Mrs. Umbridge) was making him feel rather out of his depth.

“Sorry—two rooms. Two singles. My colleague will be coming in later this evening.”

Romilda sighed, shaking her head slowly. “Unfortunately, we don’t offer singles here.”

Harry’s brows furrowed. What kind of inn didn’t offer singles?

“Two doubles, then,” he demanded, crossing his arms. Because there was no way he was sharing with his—

“Actually, I just checked the system, and it looks like only have one double left. A queen-sized bed.” Romilda looked up at him apologetically. “It’s very much hotel season, what with school kids off for the summer hols.”

Oh for the love of God. Even such a wretched place like this was fully-booked?

Since Riddle had taken the car, he couldn't even try looking somewhere else.

"Will that be okay?" she asked.

It has to be, Harry groaned internally, begging someone above to take mercy on him.

He ran a hand through his messy locks. "Yeah, that should be fine. Two key cards, please."

Romilda nodded, rounding the corner of the front desk. "Absolutely, right this way."

As Harry followed her, he could have sworn he felt eyes watching him from the darker, hazier corners of the inn. Quiet, hysterical giggles followed his footsteps.

And whispers.

"Bottom... definitely the bottom."

. . .

Finally. *Oxford*.

Tom got out of the car, slamming the door shut behind him as he headed straight for his first stop.

The library, of course.

He skimmed through the books on display, sweeping across the grandest parts before walking towards a closed door at the quietest end of the room.

Locked, as expected. *But*, Tom slipped a pin from under his sleeves, *he had his ways*.

The door softly clicked open, opening to reveal his one of favorite rooms in the entire campus. The Bodleian Libraries' *Special Collections*, keeper of manuscripts and rare books.

He switched on the lights and walked in, closing the door behind him as he ran his eyes over the illuminated papyri and paintings in various languages. Sanskrit, Aramaic, Egyptian, Armenian, Tibetan... Tom looked on in contentment.

This was where history really seemed to come alive— here, in this room filled with medieval Biblical translations and Roman treaties.

It was no surprise that this had been the headquarters for many secret societies during his time here.

"Tom?" spoke a booming, pleased voice. "Tom Riddle?"

Tom slowly turned around, a faint smile whispering across his lips. He'd been so lost in the manuscripts before him, he'd barely noticed the sound of the door opening. His former professor, Dean of the Saïd School of Business, stood behind him, his walrus mustache and rotund figure as definitive as he remembered.

“Professor Slughorn,” Tom said, allowing delight to color his voice. “I was wondering when we’d run into each other.”

“My *boy*, ” Slughorn said heartily, a warm smile gracing his features as he walked forward to greet his greatest former student. “Back from the U.S. already?”

Tom chuckled. “Not for long, I’m afraid.”

He paused, as if in deep contemplation. Slughorn, unable to restrain his curiosity for long, was looking at him with burning expectancy.

“... Well?” Slughorn asked, unable to restrain his curiosity for long. He looked at his former student with burning expectancy. “What is it, Tom?”

“Professor Slughorn,” he began, slowly, staring piercingly at the elderly man.

“What do you know about horcruxes?”

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Hello, hello! Before reading, please note that the rating of this work has changed from M to E. ;]]]]

As always, betaed by the incredible Ava Luxis ♥

Enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Professor Slughorn,” he began, slowly, staring piercingly at the elderly man.

“What do you know about horcruxes?”

Slughorn paled.

“Tom...” He slowly shook his head, staring at his former student with wild eyes. “I thought you were over that—”

Tom slammed a hand down on the desk before him, rattling the few manuscripts on display. For all their historical significance, it would be a pity if he had to *break* them before the elderly man answered.

“Now, now, professor,” he murmured lowly, “Those *are* the magic words, aren’t they?”

Slughorn straightened up, his eyebrows furrowed. “Yes, they are. Although I have no clue how you managed to obtain the secret code for a society of writers you are *no longer part of*—”

“*Tell me where she is,*” Tom snarled furiously, patience running out, his hand reaching out as if to grab the man’s collar.

“Even I do not know where she is,” Slughorn cried, veering away, his backside hitting the very door he’d come in from. “The last I heard, she was in Scotland... living in a great big castle...”

Tom’s eyes flashed dangerously. “Is that so?”

Right then, Slughorn’s phone buzzed on the table between them. A bright message appeared on the screen: the beginning of a text.

>> Joanne: Professor Slughorn! I’ll be in town tomorrow for the *Diagon Alley Writer’s ...*

They both stared at it, one in growing horror and the other in vicious satisfaction.

How utterly convenient, Tom thought with glee.

In an action delayed by shock, Slughorn leapt for his phone and dug it into his trousers pocket. But it was too late and they both knew it.

“What a talented liar you are,” Tom hummed, a faint smile gracing his features as he walked towards back towards the door. As he passed by his former professor, he muttered into the man’s ear.

“Let’s keep this between ourselves, yes?”

And as the door slammed shut behind Tom, the elderly man hunched into himself, his head bowed and hands shaking as the shock hit him.

“As if...” Slughorn whispered. “I have any other *choice* .”

. . .

For the first time in weeks, Tom felt content.

Because even though his work life was shit—Dumbledore and Riddle Sr. had been making his life hell—at least his *James Evans* business was finally on track.

For one, he’d made up with lightning_boi.

In the two weeks following his comment (“Unsubscribed ;]”) on *boss from hell*, Tom had been too busy adjusting to a certain change in workplace leadership to check his social media. But during his sparse spare time, Tom had taken to stalking the boy’s writing on Ao3, reading everything down to his Author’s Notes at the beginning and end of every chapter.

A/N, *boss from hell* : Hello! I’m back from the dead (I have a *boss from hell*, I swear he’s the devil) with a new chapter!

It was strange, how much one could learn about the author from their notes.

At first, Tom had found lightning_boi’s Author’s Notes silly, albeit humorous and entertaining... much like the protagonist in most of his stories.

A/N, *Chained* : Sorry, I was going to update a year ago but then my cat ate the chapter _(ツ)_/ (yeah bois he eats bytes for breakfast)

A/N, *Chained* : Hey! I updated! At least it wasn’t four months later like last time, right? ^^ *dusts off this fic* *coughs*

After some time, Tom began to find them... dangerously *endearing*.

A/N, *Daddy Firebolt*: So it turns out I’m alive. I know, even I was surprised by it.

A/N, *Yet Another Slytherin Wins AU* : Haha, uh, hi? Don’t kill me please. I was trying I swear, but life has been cancelling all of my free time since I signed my soul away to this new job.

Lightning_boi was funny and sarcastic. He had a self-deprecating sense of humor that Tom found himself drawn to, despite his general dislike of those who lacked confidence. And what he found

odd in the first place was how *much* lightning_boi interacted with his readers.

The boy *apologized* for updating late when he had no obligation to do so in the first place. He responded to every single comment without fail. And he always, *always* thanked his readers for being patient and keeping up with his updates.

Tom had never paid attention to Author's Notes himself, having rarely written any except for that one time when he announced that he was abandoning *The Orphan*.

But lightning_boi's notes, which were somehow written in a way that seemed to draw the eye? He never failed to read them.

A/N, boss from hell : No, your eyes do not deceive you. 'Tis I, risen from the dead to give you this chapter. The power of fanfiction has disturbed my slumber once again.

A/N, Chained : *touches this fic like a walkie-talkie from the past century* H-hello? Is this still working?

A/N, Chained : oh look, inspiration strikes again on the story I least expected. Anyways, enjoy!

Witty and creative. Clearly intelligent.

Strikingly *honest*.

It was no wonder that stalking lightning_boi seemed to have affected his mental faculties.

Settling down on a chair in the Bodleian Libraries, Tom absentmindedly opened his Discord App, searching and scrolling back to the conversation that had happened on that fateful day.

The Inner Circle: #trash-talk

>> Hadrian_Evans: *I'm lightning_boi. Good fucking bye.*

Because the mere memory of that message pinging his phone several days ago, of how stunned Tom had been afterwards...

Discord: *Hadrian_Evans has left the server.*

Of how inexplicably *frustrated* he had been...

>> Bella_Tricks: Ha, *interesting*. A lowly peasant hiding beneath our very noses.

>> Ra_beast_an: Rather like a rat, except even worse than Peter.

>> ThunderousThor: Serves him right

>> SmolDragon: God, how did *he* get in here? Is there a way to air out a channel?

Oh, the moments after lightning_boi had left his server had certainly been enlightening.

Tom had been horrified to realize that he actually *cared* what lightning_boi thought of him. And to have him leave like that, daring to take away the last word from *Lord Voldemort*...

No. *No*.

Ridiculous. It shouldn't have mattered. Lightning_boi should have meant nothing to him.

But two weeks of stalking the boy's writing on Ao3, reading everything down to his Author's Notes on every chapter with a surprising lack of accompanying disdain... had taken its toll on him.

Tom hadn't realized he desired the other's company until it was gone for good.

The boy had practically been falling into his hands all this time, nearly within his grasp, only to fly away due to a lack of Tom's own—*foresight*.

Tom's lips had curled in denial, refusing to call himself out on what it really was.

Stupidity.

At this realization many weeks ago, he'd exited out of the exploding server without another word.

The next thing he'd done was look up LightningVolt. The term had been all over Tumblr, revolving around the very chain of comments between himself and lightning_boi on *boss from hell*. And there was even fanart about them.

This shipping. It was *mad*.

He noted that Jarvolo fans (because that seemed to be the demographic mainly involved in shipping LightningVolt) were the thirstiest lot of the *James Evans* fandom. They weren't content with shipping the main character with one of the greatest villains in twenty-first century literature. No, they wanted to ship the *writers* of these fanfiction pieces as well.

And the most delicious irony surrounding this all was what they *didn't* know: that Marvolo Gaunt, Lord Slytherin, was a character based on no other than Tom Marvolo Riddle.

Yes.

Tom leaned back in his chair, taking a trip down memory lane.

Joanne, Joanne.

They'd met at one of Oxford's many libraries, despite Joanne not attending Oxford ("*Exeter College, just three hours south of here!*"). After running into each other a couple of times in the same sections of the libraries, they had become acquaintances of a sort.

"Are you a Latin major?" Joanne asked, her eyes skimming the titles of the books Riddle had accumulated.

"Are you a French major?" Tom replied, with no small amount of derision. What, a man couldn't read anything intellectual for fun?

Joanne appeared friendly as ever, perhaps not picking up on his desire to be left alone.

"French and Classics double-major, actually." She smiled, before narrowing her eyes at one of the titles in Tom's pile. "Well, that's quite a long title for a book."

Tom raised an eyebrow. "Draco dormiens nunquam titillandus." And then, anticipating Joanne's lack of understanding, he translated. "Never tickle a sleeping dragon."

With that, he resumed reading... only to be disturbed once again by the curious woman besides him.

"What is it about?"

Gritting his teeth, Tom turned to face the young woman.

“It’s a book,” he replied dryly, with an air of long-suffering patience, “On how one should not annoy their superiors.” He looked at her meaningfully, but as always, it seemed to go above her head.

She only hummed thoughtfully before proceeding to ask him about every other book in his pile.

Her full name, as Tom had later found out, was Joanne Roaring. And certainly Joanne *Kathleen* Roaring, as assumed by most. The middle name was fake.

“I need a fake middle initial,” Joanne muttered, more to herself than to Tom. “Something that makes my name sound more... masculine.”

Tom rolled his eyes. *“And what gave you that idea?”*

She paused, looking at him in exasperation. “My bloody publishers, that’s who.” She adopted a fake, mocking voice. “Ah, but you see? Young boys won’t read it if they think it was written by a woman.”

Joanne stopped, scowling down at her laptop. “I hate this. I dislike having to change myself for the sake of marketing.”

“Then find a different editor,” Tom offered, still not looking up as he flipped the page of his textbook.

He hadn’t anticipated the weighted silence afterwards, or the way Joanne would respond.

“Are you offering, Mr. Riddle?”

And so, through circumstances quite by chance, Tom decided to work with Roaring after carefully assessing the woman’s manuscripts and outlines. It was quite fascinating, with intense world-building and character development that would surely leave readers spellbound.

What a fitting start to his Editing career.

Being the perfectionist he was, Tom grew quite invested in the series, researching every little aspect of the story alongside her to make sure it fit together nicely.

“What about ‘Toujours Pur?’” Tom suggested, looking over the manuscript on his laptop. “Latin for ‘Always Pure?’”

Joanne’s eyes widened. “That’s brilliant!” She stood up, unnecessarily dramatic. “You know what? We should just use Latin references everywhere—”

And of course, the most important part—the character around whom they tended to get into rather heated conversations.

“Lord Horcrucio?”

“No.” Tom shook his head firmly. “Marvolo wouldn’t name himself after a mere spell or device.” He looked up towards the ceiling, searching for the right words to express the character’s motivations.

“He would fashion himself a new name, something original and far more fearsome...”

Joanne raised her eyebrows at him, muttering something along the lines of, “More fond of the villain than the author at this point...”

“Why not Conqueror of Death?” Tom suggested eventually.

“No, no, absolutely not!” She shot him an exasperated look. “He cannot conquer death, that’s the point! He fears it... he flees it...”

“Vol de Mort,” Tom said quietly.

Joanne looked at him, silently mouthing the translation of Tom’s French.

‘Flight from Death.’

It was perfect.

“I... quite like that,” she said contemplatively, before shaking her head. “But given that Marvolo inherits his mother’s last name on his birth certificate, he goes through his Hogwarts years knowing his wizarding heritage. Naturally, he would demonstrate an acceptance of his heritage by assuming the title of Lord Slytherin—”

“He would not.” Tom interrupted, his voice going hard. He looked away from the manuscripts, glaring at Joanne. “Marvolo would not credit all of his success to heritage, not when his own family failed him so egregiously—”

“What makes you think,” Joanne’s voice suddenly turned cold, just like the rest of her pale demeanor, “that you know my villain better than myself?”

“Oh, I’m not sure,” Tom replied scathingly, “Perhaps the fact that you based him on me?”

Indeed, the main villain of *James Evans* continued to be a point of contention between them. And despite their occasional disagreements, he and Joanne had worked surprisingly well together, writing and publishing the first six books of the series... which went on to gain immense popularity and critical acclaim.

Everything had been going very well until halfway through the seventh book.

They were already tired of each other by that point, but the reason for their argument was the same as always:

Lord Slytherin, again. More specifically, whether or not he deserved one last chance at redemption, an opportunity to survive the war.

Joanne slashed her pen across the freshly printed documents. “We kill him off. Struck by his own rebounding spell. Pure symmetry.” She leaned back in her chair, sighing contentedly.

Tom laughed mirthlessly. Unkindly.

Joanne tensed immediately.

“What is it?”

“Oh,” Riddle tilted his head, “I just find it rather insulting that you base a significant character on me, only to kill him off in such a manner because you decide he doesn’t deserve redemption.”

J. K. Rowling, of course, had believed Slytherin didn’t deserve redemption. In the end, just as she

had wanted, Roaring killed him off without a second thought at the end of the seventh book.

Unable to agree on this point, she and Tom cut ties, and Roaring published the seventh book with another company.

Meanwhile, Tom had been *furious*. He had, perhaps foolishly, grown emotionally invested in the series with which he had begun his Editing career. And after years of seeing this character and his backstory being developed, inspired by none other than his own?

He *despised* the fact that there was no redemption for this villain that was *so much like him*.

And thus, the birth of Lord_Voldemort_.

Tom fashioned himself a new name, a name he knew *James Evans* fans everywhere would one day speak with awe, when he had redeemed and reaffirmed Lord Slytherin as the greatest villain of twenty-first century literature.

Through Fanfiction.

He wrote a variety of Lord Slytherin Wins AUs—his favorite trope. He posted works like *No Glory*, where James Evans started off as a mere enslaved Horcrux to the victorious Lord Slytherin. He wrote shorter stories like *Mine*, where James Evans was trapped, buried alive in a coffin, as Lord Slytherin continued his plans for world domination.

Tom gained over three thousand followers on *No Glory* within the span of months. His favorites-to-followers ratio was rather impressive. In fact, while he rarely read reviews, he tracked his Traffic Stats obsessively.

Power was in the *numbers*, after all.

Tom knew that Fanfiction.net was where the masses were. It was where he rapidly collected followers, and more followers meant more people reading his work and spreading the word to others until — *yes*.

Lord Voldemort succeeded in establishing a loyal following.

(Of course, he discovered Archive of Our Own later on. It was a... *cute* platform, Tom supposed. He'd begun to cross-post once he'd found out it existed.)

So unlike ninety-nine percent of writers on the website, he did not start off writing *James Evans* fanfiction for the purpose of pure entertainment or shameless smut. Tom wrote it because he wanted to give the series's villain the ending he deserved.

Of course, it was only a matter of time before he *was* writing shameless smut. And it was all thanks to *him*.

Harry Potter.

Because now that Tom knew the younger man was reading his fanfiction, a thrilling rush of adrenaline tingled down his spine each time he updated.

Much in the way Lord Slytherin enjoyed pushing the boundaries of magic, Lord Voldemort enjoyed testing the limits of projection. The fine line he walked between fiction and reality grew finer with every chapter of his *Green-Eyed Monster* .

It was laughable to think he would ever be caught, least of all by his sweet, tempting personal assistant—his hopelessly oblivious muse.

Tom refreshed Fanfiction.net and Ao3, checking his stats one last time to see how his latest update of *Green-Eyed Monster* was faring . Then he launched a new Word document to begin the next chapter of his rom-com Office AU... as opposed to working on his other WIPs.

Harry Potter always ruined his plans.

As if hearing his words and wanting to prove otherwise, his iPhone X pinged with a notification from Discord—one of the few types of notification he had turned on for his exclusive server.

Discord: *lightning_boi has joined the server.*

Tom's mouth curled upwards against his will.

Well, Harry Potter and lightning_boi, both.

. . .

Harry couldn't believe they'd gotten stuck with a room like *this*.

It was—it was—

Oh *god*, were those rose petals on the bed sheets?

Silken, red sheets were laid out over a surprisingly small queen bed, contrasting tackily with the petals strewn upon it. Pale, gauzy curtains hung around both sides of the bed like a canopy, providing the illusion of privacy while allowing light to stream in.

Not like there was much light to begin with. The room was dimmer than Harry on a bad day.

"I hope this meets your expectations?" Romilda asked, having guided Harry straight to the room. At least *Amortentia Inn* didn't cut any slack on customer service—he couldn't recall ever being escorted to his lodgings.

As he turned back to view the room, his eyes widened on a big box near the TV, very explicitly labeled: Toys.

Toys?

Oh hell, no. Harry really hoped that wasn't what his dirty fanfiction-mind thought it was. Because if Riddle saw that and thought the same thing—

"Sir?" Romilda questioned.

—he was *dead*.

Harry choked on what might have been his most diplomatic response (a sarcastic "Above and beyond, ma'am, mind if I vacuum the bed sheets?") and ended up nodding silently.

“Please,” Harry began once he’d finally found his voice once more, “give the second key card to Tom Marvolo Riddle when he comes to the front desk.”

Because he didn’t want to be *in the room* when his boss saw it for the first time. In fact—a nice cup of authentic English tea sounded splendid. Harry would definitely be exploring the town outside later today.

“Very well.” Romilda nodded brusquely before promptly exiting the room, leaving Harry alone to bond with his new love shack.

Sighing, Harry shrugged off his jacket and opened the closet to hang it—

His eyes widened in disbelief.

Oh *fucking* hell.

Two towels lay hanging inside, one with a heart pattern and the other decorated with a collection of many different hand symbols. Harry swore the second towel contained two adjacent symbols that looked distinctly like .

At this point, he dearly hoped it *was* just his dirty imagination.

But there were a couple of articles of clothing in the closet that even Harry couldn’t have dreamt up: two of the most transparent bathrobes he’d ever seen in his life hung from hangers at the right end of the closet, the wall behind them clearer than daylight.

Closing the closet with a definitive click, Harry proceeded to walk across the room and shove the toy box underneath the bed. Because with the kinds of symbols that were decorating its exterior, Harry had a feeling its contents were exactly what he was thinking of.

Afterwards, he got out his laptop and fell onto the bed. Wow, it was surprisingly comfy? He supposed this was where *Amortentia Inn’s* investments had been focused.

Then, realizing he had a whole hotel room to himself with nothing to do but "stay put" until evening, Harry decided to mess around. After all, since he'd started living with Ron, he hadn't had this kind of privacy in *ages*...

So he watched some porn. He drew smutty Jarvolo art... which came out looking like a banana fucking a slug but, *hey*, who was watching? Who was there to *criticize* his every word, every action, every *breath*? Nobody.

And because nobody was watching, Harry connected his laptop to his portable bluetooth Bose speakers (a beloved birthday present from his godfather, who loved music just as much as him — Harry took them wherever he went), turned on Spotify, and had a mini dance party too.

After tiring himself out and finding that he had nothing else to do, he logged onto the Jarvolo Discord server. He swiped through some of the channels—every one of them was highlighted as *unread* because he hadn’t been on in days—before deciding to stick with one.

Chamber of Secrets: #general

>> **lightning_boi**: hey boisssss

A flurry of replies met his message mere moments later.

>> **GaliLEO:** lightning man! How you been boss?

>> **ChoAegyo:** lightning uwu, how does it feel to be famous?

>> **TheSnapeThatSmilesBack:** Our new celebrity...

>> **Lav:** omggg lightning where's *Volt* <3333

Harry held back a smile as he absorbed everyone's enthusiasm. He hadn't realized how much he missed his fellow Jarvolo fans until coming back here.

>> **lightning_boi:** hey guys! Oh yeah, tea—I was dm-ed by Voldemort the other day.

As soon as Harry sent the message, he slid down all the way until his shoulders were touching the bed, grinning with anticipation.

He was not disappointed.

>> **HeadGirl:** *What?*

>> **RoonilWazlib:** *DUDE!*

>> **AngelinaJolie:** OHmygo

>> **Lav:** hhhhhhh

>> **GaliLEO:** holy shiT... pics plz?

Harry held back his grin with a fist to his mouth, responding with his other hand. He navigated to his earlier conversation with Voldemort and screenshotted sections of it.

>> **lightning_boi:** alright, no distributing beyond this chat (looking at you @GaliLEO ;))

>> **ChoAegyo:** awwwww

>> **Lav:** hhakhefekahaf I RECOGNIZE THAT SMIRK

>> **AngelinaJolie:** looks like someone's already adopting Voldemort's infamous habits~~

>> **GingerGorl:** Just don't adopt his habit of staying aloof and unresponsive because we missed you! <3333

>> **Forge:** whoa ^^ someone's not a fan of LV

Harry sent them images of his conversation with Voldemort, once again awaiting their reactions with anticipation. Man, this was almost as bad as waiting for comments on his chapters.

He needed *more*. He needed *validation* —proof that he wasn't freaking out over nothing—

>> **HeadGirl:** *You. Are. So. Lucky.*

>> **HeadGirl:** To be on the receiving end of such eloquent compliments? From arguably one of the best fanfic writers ever?

>> **GaliLEO:** boy don't you ever ask me for validation again because *that* right there is the cherry on Top

>> **SeanTheSheep:** don't you mean Harry is the cherry and Voldy is the top? ;) | **7 lenny reacts**

Harry felt his ears redden at that. Good thing he hadn't shown the whole snippet where they had discussed *nevermind the end*. For some reason, that had felt too private.

Ha. Imagine telling the whole Jarvolo fandom that Lord Voldemort *wanked* to fics...

>> **AngelinaJolie:** Mannn I am so binge-reading all of those fics you and Voldemort discussed

>> **ChoAegyo:** sameeee

>> **Forge:** Lightning! Congratulations—

>> **Gred:** On your impending wedding—

>> **Forge:** When can we expect invitations?

Harry continued to chat with them for a while before deciding to wrap up his conversation to write fanfiction for a bit. It felt like it had been ages since he'd touched his writing folder at all.

Did he even remember how to write anymore?

Harry placed his fingers on the keyboard and began to type whatever came to mind—his usual process.

... And suddenly, I was falling down, pushed onto the other man's lap.

My lips were a mere breath away from Marvolo's.

As Marvolo continued to talk on the phone, unaffected as always, I held my breath. My muscles tensed up. I was starting to sweat and I highkey wanted to sniff my armpits to make sure I hadn't forgotten to put on deodorant that morning—

Harry stopped, resisting the urge to headbang his keyboard because, *Ugh*. What the *fuck* was wrong with him? Could a scene get any unsexier?

He sat up on the bed, craning his neck and cracking his knuckles deleting all of the text and started anew.

"Greatness inspires envy, envy inspires spite, spite spawns lies," Marvolo said eventually, his voice low and enchanting.

I stared at him with a clear lack of comprehension.

"What are you trying to tell me?" I returned incredulously, perhaps a bit more sharply than intended. Most likely because the man, as always, had me utterly confused.

Marvolo finally turned to face me, his dark eyes boring into mine with an almost frightening intensity belied eerily by the faint smile stretched across his face.

"All I am saying is that my fans are jealous of you, because you possess an opportunity they do not."

He leaned in, his mouth brushing the tip of my ears.

“After all... no one has ever dared to spend the night in the same bed as Lord Slytherin.”

Harry paused in his typing, grinning at the scene he'd just written. *Now* he was getting somewhere. A bedsharing trope, how... fitting.

I raised my eyebrows at him, suppressing the urge to grin outright. “Are you saying you’re a virgin?”

Marvolo’s own eyebrows shot upwards at that, his mouth twitching downwards momentarily. But moments later, his expression had been smoothed out, every last indication of emotion ironed out of his features.

“Spending the night and having sex are two entirely different concepts—of course, you wouldn’t know, having never experienced the latter.”

At that, I felt myself heating up, blood rushing to my head in mixture of anger and embarrassment
—

Harry was disturbed by the gmail notifications popping up on the bottom right of his screen. He skimmed over the subject line, ready to ignore it, but froze once he'd actually managed to grasp what it had said.

[Ao3] Lord_Voldemort_ posted Chapter 9...

Suddenly, Harry couldn't have cared less that it was cloudy and raining outside, or that he was sleep-deprived, because his day had just gotten so much brighter.

Bless. Praise the Lord.

He clicked on the email and was navigating towards the link before he could stop his own fingers. Lord_Voldemort_ had just updated *Green-Eyed Monster*, his favorite work by the author yet. Well, technically not his favorite work... Harry couldn't really decide on one when it came to Voldemort.

Without further ado, he began to read.

“Sorry, sir. The elevators aren’t working,” James gasped as he scrambled in, his face flushed (somewhat appealingly) from running. His hair, as always, was a bedraggled mess, and his apparel was in far worse state.

The boy had a prophesied knack for testing his patience.

“Are the stairs not working as well?” Marvolo intoned sarcastically. Because any normal human being who arrived at least five minutes early would have had no trouble being on time.

Harry snickered. Marvolo's reactions to every little thing James did were priceless, especially since James remained oblivious to them.

The protagonist was clearly obsessed with the other man.

Marvolo scowled darkly as James continued to scramble for excuses. He gritted his teeth, his mind automatically cycling through about fifty possible ways to berate his incompetent assistant for disrespecting his time.

“...And, well.” James bit his lip, looking at him sheepishly. “I know those all sounded like excuses —”

Marvolo paused in disbelief. Was the boy finally going to admit the error of his ways?

“—but the coffee line was way longer than usual!”

Nevermind .

Marvolo turned away from James to avoid being swayed by his naturally sympathy-inducing demeanor. Few things could phase him. But those large, pleading green eyes (the same eyes James showed him whenever Marvolo was on the brink of firing him) were practically his kryptonite.

Harry grinned, rolling onto his back and settling the bottom edge of his laptop against his stomach. He rather enjoyed getting the inside scoop on how it felt to be attracted to one’s subordinate.

He continued to read the chapter, enjoying many of the tension-ridden interactions between Marvolo and James. As it progressed, Marvolo seemed to grow more and more hassled as his project deadline approached, mostly because his ‘bloody assistant’ wasn’t doing his job.

Of course, given that work was written in third person limited, Harry was inclined to believe that the (poor, overworked) assistant *was* doing his job and that Marvolo was merely exaggerating for the sake of being dramatic.

Harry rolled his eyes, biting back a grin as he scrolled down on his laptop. The protagonist was reminding him more and more of a certain someone—

He cut that train of thought off quickly and continued to read.

As they were traveling upwards, the elevator suddenly stopped.

James narrowed his eyes, jabbing at the buttons. None of them lit up.

He slowly looked back at Marvolo, dawning horror etched across his face. They were the only two people in the building past midnight, and neither of them had their phones.

“Shit!” James cried, evidently having reached the state of mind where he felt comfortable swearing in front of his boss. “Oh my god, oh my god—!”

“Stop,” Marvolo said calmly. As usual, he had to be the wiser one in a time of crisis. “Just breathe. Getting nervous will only make things worse—”

“I’m claustrophobic!”

“Shit.”

Oh, yes! Harry mentally fist-bumped at that. Now that the main pair were alone, trapped in a confined space, things were sure to escalate. Of course, claustrophobia might get in the way sexy times, but there was a chance that something would happen.

And sure enough, Lord Voldemort did not disappoint.

Marvolo leaned forward, grasping James’s perpetually messy locks and pulling his head back.

James’s green eyes began to water deliciously, blinking in pain at Marvolo’s grasp. But he was stubborn as ever, and he did not utter a word of complaint.

“If we ever contractually engaged in BDSM,” Marvolo began softly, “I would have you begging for release for hours on end. I would keep you chained to my bed, using all manner of toys on you until you were sobbing.”

Marvolo came closer, his voice dropping to a low whisper. He felt the other man shiver as his lips brushed against James’s wet cheeks.

“And only after edging you to the brink of your limits would I, being a merciful master, allow you to come.”

At that, the fixed elevator finally dinged and conveniently opened. Marvolo unceremoniously let go of James and stalked away without a second glance.

Because if all went according to plan, the younger man would be crawling back to him... preferably, on his knees.

At the very least, with the completed version of last week’s overdue report.

Harry slapped a hand against his mouth as he came to the end of the chapter, his eyes wide behind his glasses. His heart rate was elevated, his thoughts scattered in every direction, blown away by Voldemort’s incredibly awesome portrayal of sexual tension.

That had to be the *hottest thing* he’d read in a while. And by ‘a while,’ Harry meant *since he’d started reading fanfiction*.

Shit. *Fuck*.

Harry hadn’t thought he liked BDSM. But now? Damn, he was willing to give it a try, thank you very much, Lord Voldemort.

After a few moments, he began to wonder what everyone *else* had thought about this update. He really wanted to *fanboy* over everything that had happened, preferably with a whole bunch of Lord Voldemort’s rabid fans.

Without a second thought, Harry navigated back to the link R.A.B. had sent him a while ago and clicked on it, relieved that it hadn’t expired. While he wasn’t sure *why* he wanted to go back to chatting with them, a part of him wanted to give the *Inner Circle* another chance... perhaps for Voldemort’s sake. And, of course, another part of him was very curious.

But right as he was logged into the server (under his lightning-boi account this time), his built-up exhaustion from the previous day’s events seemed to catch up with him.

He closed his laptop and lay still on the bed for a while, soaking in everything that had happened while enjoying the feeling of the soft, satin bed sheets beneath his limbs. A stray rose petal caught between his fingers, and the warm, dim lighting of the hotel room suddenly seemed more appealing than it had earlier.

Harry drifted off to sleep.

Harry awoke to a violent bang as the hotel door slammed open, hitting the wall behind it.

“*Harry*, ” Riddle snapped, his biting tone making Harry want to curl back into the bedsheets. “Do you know how many times I called you?”

Crap. He’d fallen asleep.

Harry rubbed his eyes sleepily, wincing as the door slammed shut with an almost deafening click. He stretched against the sheets, restraining the urge to yawn. For some reason, he felt that showing hints of humanity in front of the man would only further piss him off.

“No message, no response, *nothing*, ” Riddle continued scathingly as he stalked into the room, his handsome, angry visage coming into view. “I pay you to put my concerns above your own and you can’t even respond? ”

Harry pursed his lips in annoyance. Well, that was an asshole-ish way of putting it. But also...

Shoot. *Messages?*

Harry’s eyes widened as the last of his sleepiness left him. He began patting his hands across the bed he’d been sprawled upon as he searched for his phone. It was nowhere in sight; it must have fallen under the bed at some point.

He looked back up at Riddle sheepishly. “Sorry, I accidentally dozed off for a bit—”

Riddle’s back faced Harry as he took off his coat, opening the closet to hang it. “Of course you did. Usele—”

His boss suddenly fell silent, pausing almost comically in the middle of reaching for a coat hanger.

Harry cringed knowingly.

Riddle must have seen the *towels*.

The older man closed the closet without hanging his jacket inside. Slowly, he turned towards Harry, finally looking directly at him for the first time since he’d arrived. A series of indecipherable expressions flickered over his face.

“Harry,” Riddle began quietly, dangerously. His tone of voice, though far sweeter than before, held a poisonous lilt. “Why are we sharing a bed?”

Harry’s fingers curled into the silken bed sheets beneath him in fear.

“Th-they don’t have any more rooms,” he replied shakily, continuing to maintain eye-contact with Riddle. Then Harry straightened up, speaking more firmly.

“We’re both *men* here,” Harry began boldly, “Surely we can survive one night together in a less-than-ideal rooming situation?”

He didn’t really like pulling the manhood card, but desperate times called for desperate measures.

Riddle straightened up at that, his arms flexing as he pulled his shoulders back. Okay, *hot*, but completely unnecessary. It wasn’t like Harry had questioned his masculinity—

“You’re right,” Riddle said softly, his tone light and almost *delicate* in comparison with the rest of him. “We are both men. Surely we can make *adjustments*. ”

Minutes later, one of the four pillows had been chucked onto the floor, along with the thinner blanket.

“Oh come *on*, ” Harry groaned, looking at Riddle in exasperation. “Seriously?” He glanced longingly towards the bed, which he now realized he hadn’t truly appreciated until it was gone.

He turned towards Riddle, his mouth opening and ready to argue—only to see the man in the process of stripping his shirt.

Harry stared.

Mother of *God*.

Riddle was ripped. His chest and lower stomach were more defined than Harry’s sense of justice. And, fuck, there was obviously no justice in the world, of *course* Riddle looked like *that*.

His shoulders were as broad as they appeared when clothed. But Harry was completely unprepared for the way his back muscles rippled as he worked his shirt up, the way his abs flexed as he stretched his arms above his head.

It lasted barely a second.

It would last *forever* in his mind.

“Holy— *dude—bro* —” Once he’d found his voice, Harry couldn’t stop spluttering nonsensical, unprofessional titles. Although to his defense, this situation had rapidly become rather unprofessional. “There’s a bathroom for a *reason*— ”

Riddle raised his eyebrows at that, his mouth tilting faintly.

“We’re both *men* here, Harry,” he replied smoothly, opening the closet to remove *both* towels from the closet and leaving none for Harry. Jackass. “But since I’m going to shower, I’ll spare your pride for now.”

Spare his pride?

Hah. Harry rolled his eyes. Thankfully, he was (mostly) secure in his sense of self-worth. He didn’t feel (completely) emasculated after seeing his boss half-naked.

If only Riddle had spared his memory. Because that visual was burnt into his mind like a Dark Mark, and the only natural next step was to compare himself to that *monster*.

Harry looked down at himself, cracking his wrists and flexing his forearm a bit. The only visible thing that moved was a tendon.

He sighed, lying down on his makeshift bed. Years of soccer practice had developed his reflexes, but they’d done absolutely nothing to build him up. And while Harry consistently worked out these days, his naturally slim form—possibly a product of childhood undernourishment—would never come close to a figure like Riddle’s.

God, what did the fucker eat? Baby *cows* for breakfast?

He was hot as *fuck*—

Harry groaned out loud, throwing a hand over his face and cutting that train of thought before it escalated.

Riddle was the one person he'd sworn off fantasizing about ages ago. Nevermind that Harry had been horribly unsuccessful lately. Of all the days to think about his boss in a sexy manner, today was absolutely not an option.

Hell, he couldn't even jerk off if necessary; the bathroom wasn't very private. The walls were so thin he could hear Riddle moving around in the shower—

Harry resisted banging his head against the wall to clear his mind.

Eventually, he found a way to distract himself. Through fanfiction, of course—giving up one kind of thirstiness for another. Because when Tom Riddle couldn't do it for him, Marvolo Gaunt certainly *could*.

Harry leaned back against the hard floor, curling into the blankets as he selected a nice, relatively clean work of fanfiction to re-read during these dark times. Oh, *yes*. One of his favorites: *In the Heart of the Sea* by KaedeRavensdale. A heartwarming mermaid AU with compelling, unique word-building and a well-developed plot.

He was so absorbed in the story that he barely heard the click of the bathroom door as it unlocked, or heard the soft footsteps of cloth slippers upon carpet until they were too close.

“Reading fanfiction?” Tom asked casually.

“No,” Harry lied instinctively, rolling onto his back so that his phone faced away from Riddle.

Seconds later, he was still staring at his phone screen, but his mind was completely blanking out. No, *freaking* out.

Had Riddle just... addressed the elephant that had been in the room since he'd caught Harry reading *Green-Eyed Monster* at work all those weeks ago.

No, *nope*. In fact, *what elephant*? There was no elephant—

“I'd almost forgotten that you read fanfiction,” Riddle murmured, beginning to dry his hair. Wet droplets fell on his face, and Harry wiped his cheeks, glaring up at the older man and trying not to focus on the way his shirt clung to his wet figure.

The next words out of Riddle's mouth made that a lot easier.

“You were reading something by Lord Voldemort last time, yes?”

Harry dropped his phone on his face.

“No,” he heard himself say faintly, his phone still blocking his vision. Harry picked it up, his heart rate speeding up as he stared intensely at his black screen. “That's my pseud, remember? I *am* Lord Voldemort.”

Riddle stopped wiping his hair with the heart-patterned towel, narrowing his eyes at him.

In a sudden flash of movement, the older man was kneeling beside him on the floor, gripping Harry's jaw between his fingers. As Riddle harshly tilted Harry's face towards himself, his dark eyes grew ever darker.

“Such *lies*, ” the older man spat, leaning in closer. “Do not *lie* to me, Harry Potter.”

Whether it was a trick of the light or reflection of the room's rosy demeanor, his burgundy irises

seemed to flash bright red.

“If you enjoy reading another’s work, the least you can do is give due credit.”

Give due credit?

And all of a sudden, Harry’s lingering irritation from the past few days—hell, the past few weeks—bubbled out him, seemingly from nowhere.

Harry snarled viciously, tearing himself away from Riddle’s grasp. “Giving due credit? Since when do you do that?”

He stood up, the blankets falling around him.

“The only thing you give me credit for are *mistakes*, but what about the countless reports I’ve done? What about all the angry phone calls I’ve handled for you?”

“That’s your *job*, idiot,” Riddle hissed in turn, standing up as well.

Harry stalked closer to Riddle, his fists clenched at his sides. “What about all the times I’ve performed just fine despite your tendency to miss telling me *anything* important?” Just remembering how hassled he’d been at the Sea-Tac airport yesterday made him angry all over again.

He crossed his arms, teeth gritting as he finished. “I do all of this and I don’t even receive a word of thanks!”

“You receive a paycheck,” Riddle enunciated dryly, stepping even closer so that Harry had to look up. “And I consistently give you raises.” His voice grew even dryer. “Interpret that as a sign of my gratitude.”

Interpret that as a sign of my gratitude.

God, Harry was about ready to murder this man.

He ran an agitated hand through his hair. He needed to cool down before he said something he regretted later—though he had a feeling he already *had*...

“I’m going to shower,” Harry said abruptly, drawing vicious pleasure from pushing *past* Riddle, knocking the other man’s shoulder away with his own as he walked towards the bathroom and closed the door behind him.

Of course, it was then that he remembered that Riddle had used up *both* towels.

Opening the bathroom door seconds later, Harry grabbed his key card from the desk and exited the room without another word.

As he made his way down to the first floor, he noticed something odd about the inn. For a place the receptionist had claimed to be completely booked, he didn’t bump into a single person. Not even staff.

As he approached the front desk, the tall, dark-haired girl from earlier—Romilda—looked up tiredly from what seemed like a textbook.

“May I help you?” she asked, looking at Harry expectantly.

“Yes. I need an extra towel.”

Romilda hummed, leaning down to extract a pink towel from the shelves beneath the desk. As she was handing it to Harry, her arm slipped and knocked over a plastic box of chocolates that had been at the edge of her desk.

The girl sighed before walking around the side of the desk and crouching down to stuff the wrapped chocolates back into the box.

Harry crouched down beside her to help gather them. Up close, Romilda looked a lot younger than he’d originally thought, and if the textbook she had been reading was anything to go by...

“Thanks,” she said, smiling at Harry for the first time. She held the box out to him. “Would you like a chocolate?” She rolled her eyes before smirking almost conspiratorially at him. “They’re for guests anyways.”

“Oh,” Harry muttered, hesitating before grabbing a wrapped chocolate from the box. “Er, thanks.”

“Of course. Anytime.” Romilda shot him a cheerful thumbs up, and *wow*, her personality had completely flipped from three minutes ago. He would never have guessed her to be the tired student she’d come off as at the beginning.

Harry turned away, unwrapping the chocolate and sliding it into his mouth. Delicious—crispy on the outside, creamy and almost buttery on the inside. It coated his tongue like silk, and it was the sweetest thing he’d had in a while.

He hummed contentedly.

Had he turned back, he might have seen the way Romilda’s smirk grew, or heard the way she dissolved into snickers and she continued to speak.

“Nothing like a healthy dose of chocolate *Viagra* to speed things up .”

Excited murmurs of approval from the rest of the hotel staff echoed down the barren hallways.

. . .

Harry had just gotten into the shower when it began.

The familiar tingle of arousal traveled down his spine, going straight to his cock.

Shit.

Not *now*.

Harry tried to ignore it—tried to think about how *thin* the walls were and how his boss was on the other side. Strangely enough, he hadn’t had time to jerk off at all lately, with how much Riddle had been after him.

But, really. Now, of all times, he grew unbearably hard?

Harry bit his tongue as another flare of arousal traveled down his spine, wreaking down his whole

body. He tensed up, determined to ignore it, clenching his jaw as he reached for the soap.

But then arousal hit him again, as suddenly as it had before. And then his back was arching in response, his ass clenching as he bit back a gasp, hitting his head against the back wall because what *the fuck*.

It was so *intense*.

Harry took himself in his hand and began to wank, quickly, routinely. He closed his mind and attempted to think of nothing but the feeling of his hand on his cock, wet skin on wet. Just the right amount of friction.

And thank god, he came rather quickly. Harry leaned his forearms against the back wall of the shower, panting. He'd definitely been quiet enough—

Heat pulsed down his limbs once more, spreading across his flushed body, and he nearly collapsed on himself.

What the fuck?

Harry looked down at himself.

He was hard again. So hard he was *visibly throbbing*.

Harry let his head bang against the shower wall as he began pumping himself in earnest. God fucking *stop* getting *hard* you *stupid* piece of— *uhhhh*—

“Harry?” Riddle called from beyond the bathroom walls, no doubt having heard the way Harry’s head slammed against the wall a couple of times earlier.

Harry ignored him, intent on finishing before he even spared a thought for the man outside. God, he could kill for a little more privacy right about—

He came, his back arching and hips thrusting into the shower’s back wall. His head tilted backwards, the water gushing out of the showerhead was starting to feel rather tepid (what kind of inn, honestly).

And now he had to clean himself again. Harry frowned, staring down at the creamy cum dripping down his upper and inner thighs.

Cracking his wrists after their uncalled-for work-out, he reached for the soap again—

Harry stopped.

He closed his eyes, attempting to control his breathing as relentless heat rippled down his limbs once more. He opened his eyes and watched, almost helplessly, as his cock slowly rose before his eyes.

Why ... wasn’t... it... going... *down*?

Harry growled in frustration and set both of his forearms against the back wall once more, losing patience and thrusting his reddened, chafed cock against the wall. The shower tiles were cold and hard enough to kill any hard-on, but even they couldn’t kill his.

He continued to drive his hips forward, panting. God, it was hurting so much now, Harry was so sore, but it still felt so— *uhhh*— good. He hated this, *hated—nnghhh*— this.

“Harry,” Riddle called out, annoyance and impatience clear in his voice. “You’ve been inside there far too long.”

Fuck. *Riddle.*

Harry’s eyes fell shut as something coiled tightly in his stomach. And suddenly, all he could see were Riddle’s back muscles rippling as he stripped, the way his jaw clenched when he was angry *ungh* and how his cheeks hollowed when he pursed those sinful *lips*—

“C- *Coming*, ” Harry gasped, his voice rough and low and strangled despite all of his attempts to sound casual.

Pure pleasure shot through his limbs, his eyes rolling back as he came again, much more powerfully than before. He slid down the wall, utterly exhausted, cum splattered across his thighs.

Why, Harry wondered dazedly, were his orgasms only getting *worse* each time?

It wasn’t enough. Nothing was enough. The water had turned fully cold, and he was still hard. He was screwed, so *so* screwed—

“Harry,” Riddle growled, “What the *hell* are you doing?”

He sounded suspicious, and rightfully so.

“C-conditioning, you fucker,” Harry retorted, his voice still rough, his teeth chattering because the water was freezing cold. Had he mentioned the fact that he was still nursing a hard-on?

Harry got to his feet again, feeling his back beginning to numb at the pattering pressure of cold water against it.

“What did you just call me?” Riddle uttered menacingly, his voice low and hard and unforgiving.

Harry blinked, feeling water droplets on his eyelashes. *What had he called him?* His mind was in shambles, his limbs shakier than a colt's.

Oh. *Oh.*

“*Sorry*, ” Harry replied breathlessly, searching for a way to distract his boss. “I just... er, *threw up*, ” It was a wonder his erection hadn’t gone down by this point, “and I really need medicine. Can you please get me some? I’m sorry. I can’t leave the bathroom in this state.”

Had he been in a better state of mind, he would have been berating himself for *begging* his boss like that. It wasn’t as if Riddle would go anyways; the man was a selfish, self-absorbed prick who only cared about himse—

“I’m leaving,” Riddle announced right outside of the bathroom door, his voice louder than before due to his startling proximity. Then, after a pause, “You may take the bed if you’re feeling unwell.”

Harry’s eyes widened at the other man’s unprecedented generosity. But before he could—er—*thank* him, the door had swung open and firmly fallen shut, leaving him alone in the room.

Relief filled him, his body releasing tension he hadn’t known he’d been holding.

Cleaning himself off quickly and jumping out of the shower, Harry tugged his clothes and got out of the bathroom. He plugged his phone charger into the lamp and packed his laptop back into his

day bag, which he placed right next to his bed. He dragged his suitcase all the way until it was next to the bed.

That way, Harry would be able to reach everything while staying in bed, thus hiding his uncomfortable situation.

Satisfied with his work, he got into bed—damn, the layers. The blanket beneath the silken cover was warm and fuzzy and *furry*. He sat back against the headboard, running his fingers through the fur before losing interest at the way his own cock seemed to tent against the blanket.

His furry little problem.

Right then, the door clicked open, and Harry quickly slid completely under the sheets, submerging himself up to his neck in the soft, warm blankets.

Riddle walked in, a polythene bag of medicines on one arm. Despite only having gone to the department store, he'd redressed in trousers and a button-up shirt before leaving.

He held out the bag to Harry.

"Take a tablet every night for three days, starting today," Riddle instructed. He rubbed his eyes tiredly, absentmindedly pinching the bridge of his nose. Wow, he was human after all. "The specialist I talked to suspects you may have gotten food poisoning." He raised his eyebrows at Harry. "Either that, or a certain strain of stomach flu."

Harry took it from him, thanking him pleasantly and setting the bag on his bedside table. Huh, Doctor Riddle.

Riddle continued to stare at him.

"What?"

Riddle looked at him expectantly. "Well? Take a tablet."

Harry felt his stomach sink. He hadn't planned on letting the ruse go this far...

"*Now?*" He rolled his eyes, trying to brush off Riddle's show of concern. "In a bit. I'll swallow it while you're changing." Yes, good plan. He would hide it away while Riddle was in the bathroom —

Riddle began stripping right there and then.

Harry's cock *jumped*.

He looked away firmly. "*Bathroom*, Riddle."

"I don't fucking care about your virginal sensibilities right now," Riddle growled, suddenly irritable. "I fetch you medicines late at night and you can't even take them?"

Something guilty twisted in his stomach, but he pushed it down. Harry turned back to him, a remark ready on his tongue—

Only to have it dissipate as Riddle's trousers pooled around his feet, leaving him only in boxers.

Harry's mouth went completely dry.

His heart rate skyrocketed. Somewhere in his chest, a monster awoke, and it was *thirsty*.

Riddle was sculpted. His creamy thighs were thick and roped with muscle. Fuck, Riddle could *choke* him with those thighs and Harry would thank him.

He was lean muscle all above, broad and strong shoulders slimming down to narrow hips. But his thick, solid thighs and long legs and just, how *huge* he was downstairs... *uhhh*.

Riddle was so *solid*, so rock-solid, and fuck, Harry was rock- *hard* now. Painfully hard.

The taller man walked forward to the other side of Harry's bed, still naked, before ripping off the blankets and getting in.

Wait.

"*Whoa*, " Harry yelped, curling into himself beneath the blankets while keeping a tight grip on them. "You said I could *take* the bed—"

Sharing was not an option. Harry would go *insane*—

"Did I?" Riddle asked lightly, his tone of voice growing soft and dulcet. His tone grew scathing rather quickly. "Well, that was before you ungratefully spurned the medicine I brought you."

He reached away towards his bedside table, switching off his lamp's light. "Be glad I am a merciful boss and will gracefully allow you to share the bed with me." With that, he turned away from Harry, tugging a good portion of the blankets with him.

Unfortunately, on a queen bed this small, the line of Riddle's back was mere inches from Harry's shoulder.

Harry tried not to scream.

He gave a small cough.

Briefly, Riddle twisted his head back towards Harry to toss him a glance of derision. "Don't get me sick."

At that, Harry sniffled loudly and exaggeratedly. "Don't come near me then."

He saw the way Riddle's neck muscles tightened as the older man clenched his jaw. "Don't *make* me. Switch off your lamp and go to sleep." The older man turned away for good, leaving him to stew in his own thoughts.

Harry stared up at the ceiling, unable to fall asleep.

Seeing as he was still unbearably *hard*.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed my first ever published-online piece of smut :)

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry stared up at the ceiling, unable to fall asleep.

Seeing as he was still unbearably hard.

After about twenty minutes of thinking unsexy thoughts, trying not to focus on how even Riddle's breathing patterns were attractive, Harry reached for his phone on the bedside table.

On instinct, he opened up and scrolled through his Tumblr dashboard before switching (inevitably) to Discord. Right, he'd rejoined *The Inner Circle* earlier—his phone showed many notifications for the new server... a lot of which seemed to be taunting messages from Bella_Tricks.

But strangely enough, Harry wasn't too interested in seeing what they'd tagged him in at the moment. Instead, he swiped through his direct messages before settling on the one chat he'd been waiting to continue.

[Yesterday at 4:22 PM]

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: But perhaps we can message later?

>> **lightning_boi**: Absolutely.

Harry stared at the most recent bit of their conversation, resisting the urge to scroll all the way back up and reread it like he had mere hours ago.

With a courage that seemed to come from nowhere, he messaged Lord_Voldemort_.

>> **lightning_boi**: Hey, what's up? Is now a good time to chat?

His anticipation spiked as he pressed send, proceeding to stare holes into his phone screen.

Nothing happened... save for Riddle's phone buzzing on the bedside table a moment later, temporarily lighting up.

Harry waited a few seconds, staring at the chat for a bit before casting aside what remained his pride and messaging once more. He didn't want to come off as *needy*, or bother the man. But perhaps one more recklessly-sent message, one more small push, to let Voldemort know he could reach out whenever he felt like...

>> **lightning_boi**: Well, hit me up whenever you're free to chat, discussing fanfiction with you the other day was really fun :)

Harry waited a few moments longer before sighing and swiping away from the chat.

What had he been expecting? Of course, he knew nothing about the man's time zone or how often he checked Discord... not often enough, if his engagement on *The Inner Circle* was anything to go by...

Riddle's phone buzzed loudly once more, and out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw Riddle groggily reaching for it with an explicit mutter.

Upon seeing the content on his phone, however, Riddle's demeanor seemed to completely change. Harry watched with avid interest as Riddle sat up in bed and straightened his shoulders. His face was serious now, as if he had important business in mind that required his immediate attention.

Sometime during this process, Riddle must have glanced over at Harry and seen that he, too, was wide awake.

"You're still up?" Riddle asked snidely.

"You are too," Harry replied glibly as he stared back at his screen, trying to look as if he had better things to do on his phone than give Riddle his time of day (especially at *this* time).

"I'm not the one who is sick." Riddle looked at Harry coldly, making his lingering annoyance clear. "It seems I bought you that medicine for nothing."

Harry turned to face Riddle, channeling his inner P.E. teacher and smiling in a sickly-sweet manner. But whatever smart, self-condemning remark he'd been about to give was wiped from his mind as his phone pinged suddenly.

Harry's attention immediately jumped to Discord, his eyes widening with delight at what he saw.

Lord_Voldemort_ had responded.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Absolutely. I've been meaning to recommend some fanfiction to you.

Harry bit back a stupid grin, replying quickly. He made sure to pay extra special attention to his grammar and spelling, though, because Lord_Voldemort_ was the kind of person who just made him want to sound... more educated?

No, that hadn't been the right word—more *impressive*.

>> **lightning_boi:** Hit me with them. I'm sure I've read them, though.

After all, Harry had been in this fandom for quite a while.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Well, I have two recommendations—my first one is *Counting Bodies Like Sheep* by rightonthelimit.

At the mention of the familiar, well-loved title, Harry suppressed what would have been an inhuman-sounding stream of excitement.

>> **lightning_boi:** *I love that fic! I love it so so so much.*

>> **lightning_boi:** I craved Zombie AUs so much after reading that work! I ~ couldn't ~ get ~ over how *brilliant* it was.

The mattress dipped and shifted. Harry turned his head, watching as Riddle leaned over his bedside table, plugging his phone charger into the lamp before connecting the wire to his device.

Back... muscles... *hnngh*...

Forcibly ripping his eyes off of Riddle's form, Harry hastily turned back to his phone and resumed

his Discord conversation.

>> **lightning_boi**: But yeah, that fic? Just the premise of it—James and Marvolo on the run together, only able to depend on each other—is so fascinating. And, god, the *twist* on why Marvolo is so innately dark, and lustful, and *bloodthirsty*—

Harry paused his fingers when he noticed Lord_Voldemort_ hadn't said anything. He wasn't even typing anything.

>> **lightning_boi**: Sorry, I

>> **lightning_boi**: I got a bit distracted/overwhelmed with love for that work.

>> **lightning_boi**: It's just that, I'm a *huge* fan of rightonthelimit.

There was a silence on the discord. Harry was tapping his fingers against his phone case almost *nervously*.

Why had the other man suddenly fallen silent—?

“Stop that,” Riddle growled, his eyes sweeping in Harry's direction before he picked up his phone from the bedside table, swiping into it.

His eyes stayed glued to the phone once he had.

Harry raised his eyebrows at his boss. That was strange and uncommon behavior for the older man. If anything, Riddle was the type of person who swept through his phone's contents in an almost monotone, routinely fashion before clicking it shut.

He didn't usually stare at the same part of his screen contemplatively.

Harry had turned his eyes back to his screen, relieved to note that Lord_Voldemort_ had begun typing again.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: No apologies necessary, I was plugging my phone into its charger. Also — I, too, consider rightonthelimit one of my favorite fanfiction authors, although I do not read fanfiction as often as I write it.

There was a pause on the other end before Lord Voldemort continued to type.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: The Jarvolo fandom is quite talented. There are a few authors whose writing styles I would consider addictive and magnetic, to the point where whatever they write—it is a success.

Harry's eyes widened, his heart thumping with anticipation. Talking to his favorite author was insane enough — but hearing that *he* also read and liked and possibly worshipped authors?

Holy *shit*.

>> **lightning_boi**: *Who?*

Who, indeed, did Lord Voldemort respect the way Harry respected *him*?

RenderedReversed, who wrote the most brilliant AU works? MaidenMotherCrone, whose elegant writing style put his own to shame?

There was another pause on the chat, as if Lord Voldemort was rethinking how he wanted to phrase his next words.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Obviously, my opinion will be controversial. I tend to rank and organize authors into “tiers” in my mind.

Harry’s mouth quirked at that. Somehow, that just seemed so... *Slytherin-like*.

>> **lightning_boi**: I absolutely do not mind! Would love to hear your opinion on the authors you consider Legend-tier ahahha

Harry sent the message, cringing as reread it. So *formal*. Being overly courteous was something he typically disliked. But something about Lord_Voldemort_ — the classic, tasteful energy he gave off, the grammatically-correct way he wrote — just made Harry want to seem more... professional.

Not a moment later, he received a response.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: ObsidianPen, TheFictionist, rightonthelimit, and Katsitting.

Harry let out a soft, breathy chuckle.

Of course. Dark, beguiling, heart-stopping works... it figured Lord Voldemort would respect the authors whose styles were very much like his own.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: These authors write my favorite tropes... and write them *very well*, never failing to keep James and Lord Slytherin in character.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: They have all written at least one canon-compliant/diverging work that demonstrates the wide emotional spectrum of the quintessential Jarvolo relationship — enmity, guilt, disgust, unwanted attraction. Elements of horror, power imbalance.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: And most importantly, their writing deals realistically with Lord Slytherin’s inability to love.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: The build-up in their works is not only believable, but mind-twisting. It leaves the reader breathless, often panting for more despite an unparalleled ending.

Harry stared at the screen, his mind reeling at how Lord Voldemort had managed to perfectly (compellingly, *seductively*) describe exactly the kind of work *he* loved reading.

Because of *course* he read Jarvolo for the angsty romance. But Harry loved the *James Evans* timeline universe so much, and few fanfiction authors twisted canon itself into a believable, angst-ridden Jarvolo fic. Hell, there weren’t nearly enough Slytherin Wins AUs out there.

Except, of course, for his favorite. *No Glory*.

>> **lightning_boi**: Beautifully worded. I agree with you on almost every point, except...

>> **lightning_boi**: You forgot one author.

There was another pause on the chat. Harry swallowed nervously, hoping he hadn’t somehow offended the man.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Oh?

Harry grinned, practically hearing the deadpanned hint of playfulness in the other's tone.

>> lightning_boi: Yourself, of course.

Harry's shit-eating grin fell slightly with annoyance as the older man beside him shifted onto his other side, the whole mattress dipping once again. Riddle gave a low chuckle that sent a shiver down his spine.

It was a shiver of *disgust*, of course. Who suddenly laughed at two o'clock in the morning? Harry was in bed with a fucking *creep*.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Harry whispered, and Riddle froze, glancing at him with annoyance, as if he'd forgotten his assistant's existence.

When the man remained caveman-level silent, Harry rolled onto his side, his back to Riddle as he went back to ignoring the man and looked down at his screen.

>> Lord_Voldemort_: Ah, so you're a fan.

Harry bit his lip, his ears starting to burn.

>> lightning_boi: Oh, don't act so coy, my *Lord*. You have too many fans to be surprised by yet another.

>> Lord_Voldemort_: Elaborate. Tell me why you like my writing.

Harry's eyebrows raised at the... *command*.

>> lightning_boi: You want me to sing your praises now?

>> Lord_Voldemort_: Want? I dare you. Praise me to *tears*.

There was an undignified snort from behind him... something Harry had never heard from his boss before.

What the hell?

"Are you okay?" Harry asked, turning his head back to look at the other man. Because he was seriously concerned about how — excuse the fanfiction lingo — *out of character* his boss was acting.

Tom raised his eyes from the screen, slowly, as if the very action pained him.

"Never mind," Harry muttered under his breath, turning back to his phone.

>> lightning_boi: Alright then, Lord Voldemort... brace yourself.

>> lightning_boi: Your characterization is always impeccable... but your characterization of Marvolo Gaunt? Out of the world. You seem to understand him and his motivations on a level I'm not sure even Roaring herself possible does...

And partly because, as Harry had begun to notice, the man *was* very much like Marvolo Gaunt.

>> lightning_boi: I know you abandoned *The Orphan*, but the way you delved into his personality — explaining every bit of darkness within him as a product of some experience in his childhood, or

as a lingering trait he may have inherited from his parents... it's fascinating.

>> **lightning_boi:** I rarely find Marvolo Gaunt a sympathetic character, but the whole exorcism scene? The scene where all those kids bullied him for being a “freak,” and how Marvolo took his revenge on them in the cave? You were probably trying to justify his actions rather than elicit any form of empathy for him.

>> **lightning_boi:** But, oh god, I felt so *much* for him...

Harry paused before continuing once more, revealing more than he had intended to originally.

>> **lightning_boi:** After all, I've gone through something similar in the past.

Harry swallowed, pressing his knuckles against his mouth as he awaited Lord Voldemort's reaction.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Were you bullied as a child?

>> **lightning_boi:** Hmm, I mean, yeah

>> **lightning_boi:** a bit, by my cousin and his friends but

>> **lightning_boi:** just the usual... the same kind that anyone goes through, I suppose.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Still, unacceptable. And it explains some things about you too.

Harry's eyebrows shot up at that.

>> **lightning_boi:** Excuse me?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Like how you are always apologizing to your readers for updating “late” when there is no need to. You are providing them with free literature — that alone should earn their thanks.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** And still — you fear their reproach, you crave their approval.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** An inferiority complex?

Harry felt Lord Voldemort's words piercing him, slicing him to bits. He felt exposed and naked, and suddenly, the blankets around him weren't enough to stop the icy feeling threatening to overcome him.

He tensed, growing defensive.

>> **lightning_boi:** And how do you know all of this? What gives you the right to judge me like this?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I've read every single one of your Author's Notes.

And just like that, the icy feeling growing within him disappeared, replaced by a fluttering sensation in the pit of his stomach.

>> **lightning_boi:** you read my a/n's?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Do not make me repeat myself.

Harry huffed fondly. Terse and blunt and to the point, as always.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** You are a very good writer.

Harry's heart *jumped*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** But I have seen the way you interact with your readers. Do not let your readers have so much *power* over you. Take their criticisms with more than a grain of salt.

Harry eyebrows furrowed. The man was being oddly... kind?

Either way, he wasn't sure he agreed with Lord Voldemort.

>> **lightning_boi:** But, like, comments are 87% of why I write fanfiction

>> **lightning_boi:** I adore their approval and enthusiasm, their thoughts about what's to come

>> **lightning_boi:** Sure, I've had to deal with my fair share of flames and trolls; but interacting with the Jarvolo fandom is half of the fun

>> **lightning_boi:** Hell, I wouldn't have even written *boss from hell* if not for all the encouragement and inspiration I got from the Jarvolo server

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Jarvolo server?

Harry froze. First, with excitement — introducing Lord Voldemort to the whole server? They would freak out.

But then he remembered all of the things he'd said, the way he'd thirsted like an insane person over Marvolo... and frick, his spelling was kind of shit too.

No, *no way* was he letting Lord Voldemort onto the server.

>> **lightning_boi:** yeah

>> **lightning_boi:** Anyways — back to my mission of praising you to tears —

Harry drummed his fingers against the phone screen as he mentally switched gears.

A grin crept across his features.

>> **lightning_boi:** I know you always try to make James seem like the “attractive” and “lust-inducing” the object of Marvolo's affections

>> **lightning_boi:** But your Marvolo

>> **lightning_boi:** is *so*

>> **lightning_boi:** *goddamn*

>> **lightning_boi:** sexy???

Harry heard a thump behind him—the sound of Riddle thumping his head against the headboard, followed by a stream of muttered curses.

Serves him right for being so damn tall.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Well

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I am pleased to hear that

Lord_Voldemort_ is typing, Discord read intermittently. In fact, the author took a while to respond... as if he were typing and then deleting, overthinking.

Caught off guard, Lord_Voldemort_? Harry smirked.

He hadn't missed the way the seemingly perfect author had forgotten a period at the end of his last few messages.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Though your words come as a surprise, given that I rarely describe him the way I do James.

>> **lightning_boi**: On the contrary, you *do*. All the time.

>> **lightning_boi**: His narration, the way he *thinks*...

>> **lightning_boi**: Intelligence, dry sarcasm, and an almost morbid sense of humor that I can't help but find endearing.

>> **lightning_boi**: I'm halfway in love with him, haha

Harry pressed send on his last message, unaware of the way his bedside companion drew a sharp breath moment later.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: And if I were to say that I project? That Marvolo's thoughts do not stray far from my own internal monologue.

Harry stopped thinking.

His mind froze, his throat drying up. And then his breathing suddenly grew faster, louder and—shit, Riddle could probably hear it at this point.

>> **lightning_boi**: Then I imagine you're a very attractive man, Lord_Voldemort_.

Harry pressed send.

Silence met his message.

The chat was utterly quiet. There was no sign that Lord Voldemort was even online anymore because the man wasn't *typing anything*.

So, of course, Harry *panicked*.

>> **lightning_boi**: Anyways, your characterization and style are really good

>> **lightning_boi**: your cliffhangers (I hate them, I love them) never fail to leave me breathless

>> **lightning_boi**: I always have to set aside time to read your work because I can *never stop in the middle*

Every message he sent felt like a plea, *Come back*. But nevertheless, all of his messages were facts, streams of consciousness that came from somewhere deep inside of him.

>> **lightning_boi**: In fact, I stayed up all night rereading *Haunted* two days ago and I just

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Yes, I seem to have that effect on my readers.

Harry could have let out a sigh of relief, knowing that the man was still online.

Then he reread Voldemort's message, blinking in confusion.

>> **lightning_boi**: What effect?

Behind him, Riddle let out yet another long-suffering sigh. Seriously, what was his problem? *Was there a pea under the mattress?*

If Harry heard anymore sighs from the fucking princess sharing his bed—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I tend to keep my readers up all night. ;]

It took Harry a moment to process that.

And then he was *gone*.

Hnnnhgh. Harry's mind went crazy as he resisted the urge to key-smash right there and then. *Holy fucking shit, was he batshit blind or was that actually —*

>> **lightning_boi**: *Oh my god*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: ;]

Harry went insane.

>> **lightning_boi**: Fuck, all those innuendos. I thought it was just me seeing them, when you called readers “breathless” and “panting for more” but shit, you fucker, you were doing that on purpose I'm—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Sweetheart, you're not the only dirty-minded fanfiction reader between the two of us.

Sweetheart, Harry's senses screamed back at him. He couldn't lift his eyes from the endearment on his screen. It was so condescending and yet so quintessentially Lord_Voldemort_ it made Harry's stomach flutter.

>> **lightning_boi**: They drove me *nuts*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: More like they drove you *to* nut.

Harry spasmed then, kicking Riddle behind him. He might have gurgled too.

“You fucking—”

“I'm *sorry*, ” Harry gasped, turning back to face his still-awake boss. “Accident, *accident* —”

Riddle kicked him back, like the spiteful, vengeful creature he was. And, shit, it didn't hurt *that*

much but it hit a little too close, *too close* to the hard-on he *somehow* still fucking had.

So, amidst the chaos of his body, bed and online life, Harry messaged—

>> **lightning_boi:** Nutting? God, I *wish*.

—only to realize, as soon as he'd pressed send, that he was in deep shit.

>> **lightning_boi:** wait

>> **lightning_boi:** wait holy shit let me explain

Harry's right leg jerked back, kicking his boss again... his spasming foot striking mere inches from his boss's joystick.

"You little *fuck* ," Riddle snarled. Harry froze, his heart rate skyrocketing as he craned his neck back.

His boss was up on one arm, eyes flashing with murderous intent. He held his phone in the other hand, its brightly-lit screen illuminating the definition of his chest and abs, the blanket riding low across his hips.

"Would you *like* to be kicked out of bed?"

Harry scrambled back on his elbows towards the very edge of the bed, knocking his phone off the bed through the slit between the mattress and the headboard. *Shit*.

"Sir," he said at once, pleadingly. "I am—so sorry. I just received a very surprising message and I couldn't help—"

"*Off!* " the older man hissed, his eyes already drifting back down to his buzzing phone. "Get off before I—"

Riddle cut himself off suddenly, his eyes staying glued to his phone screen.

Then the older man shot up in bed, his eyes wide and pupils fully blown as he stared at it. And, oh my, the poetry of his eyebrows rising—those devils had more arch than the parabolas in *Morsmorde's* Algebra textbooks.

"Riddle?" Harry tried, only to be ignored.

He didn't think he'd ever seen Riddle so *expressive*. It was unfamiliar, but far from unpleasant. And with a plummeting stomach in his feeling, Harry realized exactly what kind of face his boss was making.

Somehow, Riddle was *enamored*.

... With whoever he was talking to. And Harry didn't *like* that.

"Your face looks weird," he said, because it was the only thing he could think of besides, ' *So, who's the unlucky girl?* ' because he suddenly wanted Riddle's attention very much.

Riddle's eyes snapped back to him.

And then suddenly, the older man aimed a strong kick at Harry's legs, finally causing him to tumble off.

Harry slammed hard into the carpeted floor, groaning as he landed roughly on his stomach... on his ever-present hard-on. Gritting his teeth, he slowly lifted himself upwards, kneeling on the floor and leveling a harsh, indignant glare in his boss's direction.

Remorse for kicking the bastard? Long gone. *Extinct*.

"Are you human?" Harry seethed, holding back tears at the way his cock continued to throb painfully. "Are you *sane*?"

Riddle smiled coldly, dangerously. It was the kind of smile that implied he'd happily push Harry off a ten-story building. "Would you believe me if I denied both accusatio—"

He was cut off by a pillow thrown at his face, courtesy of Harry James Potter.

In the moment of his boss's distraction, Harry stood up, grabbed the very top blanket, and began walking off to the opposite corner of the room. Honestly, after half a night's worth of abuse, the floor was looking a lot more welcoming than the bed—

There was a firm, opposing tug on the blanket that stopped him in his tracks, and Harry slowly turned back.

Was he going to be invited back to bed...?

Riddle looked at him, his expression unfathomable save for the chilling glint in his eyes.

"Apologize," he commanded imperiously.

Harry's eyes widened incredulously.

"For kicking you?" He scoffed, shaking his head in disbelief at the *nerve* of this man. "You *kicked me back* —"

He stopped himself abruptly, caught off guard by Riddle's expression.

His eyebrows raised as if he were coolly regarding a pest, his lips relaxed and unsmiling. But the icy glimmer in other man's gaze destroyed the facade of mere annoyance.

Harry tensed slowly, the hairs on the back of his neck rising as a sense of foreboding struck him.

"You deserved that," Harry said quietly, defiantly, even as it came out sounding more like a plea. Because the tables had turned, and just like that, Harry remembered exactly why he had once feared his boss so much... why he sometimes still *did*.

That unbearable coldness.

Harry would take Riddle's heated insults any day over distasteful regard... or worse, disregard altogether.

Don't fire me. Leave me alone. His thoughts were a flurry of contradictions even without the assistance of Riddle's befuddling tongue.

Harry held his breath, staring at the dauntingly expressionless man for a few moments more before facing away, his hands still gripping the top blanket as he took another step away from the bed—

Suddenly, there was a much harsher pull on the blanket, one that had Harry falling back onto the bed. A warm arm caught him around his waist, pulling him further backwards against tantalizingly

firm, naked skin.

Harry stopped breathing.

Riddle held Harry against his chest, the two of them breathing in silence for a few tension-ridden seconds.

Then at once, he tightened his arm as he dropped his head against the back of Harry's neck. The older man's mouth grazed the shell of his ear as he let out the most seductive-sounding murmur.

"Oh? I *deserved* that?" His voice, mocking despite its beguiling pitch, dropped an octave. "Then tell me, *Harry*, what else do I deserve?"

Wh-what?

Harry remained silent, breathless. The sensation of Riddle's warmth pressed up against him, of his breath hitting the back of Harry's neck and tingling down his spine...

It was unbearable, especially since he knew it was all just a game to Riddle anyways.

But that didn't stop Harry from wanting, from succumbing to the pleasure of his touch against the will of mind—

A cool hand suddenly crept up Harry's neck, curling around his jaw menacingly, almost *possessively*.

"Since you failed to answer, I shall tell you." The long fingers on his waist began to trace feather-light, distracting shapes. "As your superior, I deserve your *respect*. Your obedience." Riddle punctuated every virtue with a paralyzing squeeze against Harry's jaw. "And above all, your utmost... *attention*."

And suddenly, the arm around Harry's waist spun him sideways and pinned him flat against the bed. Riddle loomed over him, his eyes dark and ignited with a strange energy as he placed his arms on either side of Harry's head.

His voice grew impossibly softer as he spoke the next few words, ending on a near-hiss.

"Do I... have... your... *attention*."

Harry trembled against the silken sheets, finally gathering the wits to whisper back. "Yes."

Riddle held his gaze. "Yes, *sir*."

That shook him out of it.

Fury licked down his spine, adrenaline energizing his limbs. Harry narrowed his eyes as he shoved Riddle back from him and sat up in bed. He straightened himself against the headboard, curling his fists defensively.

He was angry, he was humiliated, who did this jerk think he *was*—?

"Sorry, but I don't call anyone 'sir' in bed."

Riddle's eyes flashed, though he made no movement to hold Harry once more.

"Perhaps you should get used to it," he murmured patronizingly, suggestively, a faint smile gracing

his fine features.

Harry saw *red*. He tightened his fist and pulled it back, aiming for Riddle's stupid face—

Only to be stopped by two firm hands grasping his wrists, holding them up against the headboard... above Harry's head.

Riddle leaned in tauntingly as Harry struggled against his grip. His smile grew sharper, almost cat-like.

“Oh, *sweetheart*, I could do this all night.”

Harry's breath hitched at the endearment despite himself. So fucking condescending... and yet, he liked it so *much*.

“Let me *go*. ”

Riddle's eyes fell half-shut a few inches from his own, his long lashes failing to hide their burning intensity.

“*Never*. ”

Harry's mouth fell open.

“*Sir—*”

“There , ” Riddle sighed abruptly, releasing Harry's wrists unceremoniously as he dropped the lover's act. A cold smile curled across his lips, a far cry from the heat in his eyes moments earlier.

“That wasn't so hard, was it?” he said softly, leaning back with satisfaction.

Harry merely stared at his boss.

Patronizing piece of shit couldn't even let him finish a sente—

“Now, since we're both wide awake, we might as well be productive.” He pushed Harry towards the edge of the bed again. “Go, retrieve our laptops.”

And that was how they ended up getting out their laptops in bed and editing shit at two o'clock in the morning.

Twenty minutes after being physically kicked out of bed, Harry was typing furiously on his laptop — which he had balanced on a pillow covering his legs “to avoid the radiation,” as he'd told his boss.

Really, the kind of bullshit he said to hide his hard-on. At this point, the situation was starting to feel unreal. It was a wonder his boss hadn't noticed it by this point.

Harry paused momentarily in his typing, staring down at his heavily-blanketed lower half in despair.

Was it something he'd *eaten* ?

“Why did you stop?”

Harry glanced up at Riddle, who had tossed the remark without lifting his eyes from the screen.

The annoying, asshole-ish, and seductive Riddle who had toyed with him earlier was gone — he was back to his typical workaholic self.

“I actually finished a scene. Is this good?” Harry turned his laptop slightly, striving to act casual for his own sanity’s sake. After all, if Riddle could do it, so could he. “I sort of deleted and rewrote the entire masquerade ball scene.”

He tensed as Riddle leaned in to view his laptop screen, his shoulder brushing Harry’s. “Better,” he said simply, his narrowed eyes rereading the scene at a high speed. “You’ve given life to a scene that was bland in the first place.”

Harry blinked at the compliment before slowly smiling, rather pleased with himself for having drawn praise out of the reticent man.

“Copy that whole scene and shift it onto the document I’m editing.”

Harry nodded, Control-C copying the entire passage and navigating to the document where Riddle’s icon was showing (a picture of Riddle in sunglasses and golf attire, *damn*, why did he look so attractive in even the preppiest-looking outfits). He scrolled down until reaching the page where Riddle’s cursor was.

What Harry pasted via Control-V, however, was not the scene that he’d just finished rewriting.

I spread my legs under his watchful gaze, dipped my fingers into the waiting glass of lube, and began to stretch myself open before him.

Shit. Harry froze in horror.

Marvolo’s eyes grew dark and heated, running over my form before settling on the area my fingers were penetrating. He licked his lips once, twice, before saying, “Turn over.”

His voice was low, thick with arousal, enough to make me submit to my own.

Harry furiously began to backspace, before giving up and trying to highlight the whole thing with his mouse. But right on cue, his shitty laptop decided to freeze his screen, and his mouse stopped working.

Oh.

Fucking.

Hell.

The sound of Riddle’s typing had long since stopped, but Harry kept his eyes on his laptop, determined to avert crisis before his boss noticed—

“What the *hell* is this, Harry?”

Too late.

Harry key-smashed in earnest, hoping something would make the keyboard start working once more. He pressed Alt+F4, just wanting to exit out of the application altogether. Riddle had already seen his writing at this point, he was going to be murdered anyways—

But instead of pressing Alt+F4, he accidentally pressed Alt+Tab.

And instead of closing his current application, it switched to his other open tab—the incognito tab upon which he’d been watching *gay porn* earlier that day. The video was paused at the most incriminating position, in the most incriminating *position*—

Holy fucking shit, could someone please shoot him *right now* ? Why hadn’t he exited out of this shit earlier?

Harry turned to look at Riddle, hoping the man was still looking at his own laptop—good *god*, still looking at the written porn he’d accidentally pasted into the doc, because *anything* was better than what his Toshiba was showing—

No such luck.

The man was staring at Harry’s laptop screen, his features wiped blank once more, as if he couldn’t believe he was seeing such things on his subordinate’s laptop.

Harry sobbed a bit inside and turned his screen away from his boss, key-smashing once more because *that* had really helped in the past, and the definition of insanity was definitely *not* doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

This time, he accidentally pressed the spacebar while key-smashing, and the video began to play.

“*Ha... ha... faster, fuck me faster...*”

Harry removed his hands from his laptop and splayed them across his face. He couldn’t bear it—the shame. The humiliation.

Then, after what seemed like an eternity of porn playing, he slowly turned to peek at Riddle through his fingers.

The man’s eyes were glued to Harry’s screen.

His expression was blank — as if he couldn’t believe his eyes, as though he hadn’t yet fully processed exactly what was going on with Harry’s Toshiba. A few moments later, Riddle blinked slowly and resumed watching with visibly dawning incredulity... as if he’d never watched porn a day in his life.

Harry couldn’t recall ever seeing the man look so *surprised*. He let out a sound — something halfway between awkward laughter and a sob.

Riddle’s eyes snapped to him.

And then he continued to stare at Harry, like he’d never seen him before, like he was the strangest creature alive.

“What... the... *fuck*?” Riddle breathed ominously, still looking at Harry disbelievingly, like he didn’t know what to do with him.

Harry wrapped his arms around himself, suddenly frustrated beyond measure because life was not fair and what had he *done* to deserve this humiliation, this—

“Stop it. *Now!*” his boss snarled, with more fury than disbelief coloring his voice now.

“YOU THINK I HAVEN’T TRIED?” Harry yelled back in Riddle’s face, which only seemed to make Riddle angrier but what *ever*, who cared if his voice was a little loud, if the neighbors heard

them—

Shit. The neighbors.

“Then *turn* the bloody thing *off!* ” Riddle hissed, the anger in his voice making his words nearly indistinguishable in their sibilance.

“I *can't*, ” Harry cried, having given up on key-smashing and just staring despondently at the porn playing on his screen. “The manual power-off buttons don’t work—and neither does closing the laptop screen.”

Riddle stared at him. “Then how do you *usually* turn off your laptop?”

Harry ran a hand through his hair. “Well... I... either it just, naturally *dies*...”

They both looked at the screen, which showed 98% battery remaining.

“Naturally... dies?” Riddle intoned dryly.

“Yes, Riddle!” Harry snapped. “Like a fucking human being.”

He didn’t even know what he was saying at this point.

“Either that,” Harry continued, after a calming breath, “Or I navigate to the main menu and click the power-off button.” He glanced at his laptop once more, desensitized to the porn playing on it by this point. “And given that the keyboard — including the mouse — isn’t working...”

“HAAAAAAAAAH!”

“Okay, who even makes that much noise while being fucked.” Harry snapped, staring pointedly at the twink bottoming in the video, wishing the boy a slow and painful death. “It’s unseemly.”

“Someone having better sex than you ever have,” Riddle deadpanned, looking at the twink as well. And now they were both watching the porn together, and that was just really fucking weird.

Harry frowned, glaring at Riddle. “Yeah, probably, considering I’ve never had sex before.”

Riddle faced him back, his eyes boring holes into Harry’s skull.

“You’re *actually* a virgin? ”

And then Harry looked at back Riddle — *really* looked at him, at the definition of his naked lower stomach, the sharp planes of his face, his broad shoulders — and remembered exactly who he was talking to.

But before he could spit out a worthy excuse, which would have been something along the lines of snide and dishonest, “Not for lack of *opportunity*,” he was interrupted by a very loud ejaculation.

“COOOMIII—”

And then the noise ceased.

Harry gasped. The video was still playing; precisely one hour and forty-three minutes remained. But for some reason, the audio had disappeared.

“It *stopped!* ” He declared with great joy, clapping his hands together. “It stopped, it actually—”

There was a weird static sound from his bedside table. Once, twice. And then, because Harry had forgotten to switch off his laptop's bluetooth after his mini-dance party earlier that day—

The porn video's audio began blaring at full volume, this time magnified through the portable Bose speakers resting on his bedside table.

And Harry would be lying if he didn't think the whole inn could probably hear it.

"Uh... uh... uhnggh..."

"You like that, baby boy? I'll fuck you a cream pie, just the way you like it."

"Yes, daddy! UNH!"

Harry's face reddened. The audio was so loud, and suddenly, it was difficult to ignore the things they were *saying*. He didn't even want to imagine what Riddle was thinking, hearing all of this.

"Get this... stupid *contraption*... out of the room," Riddle said slowly, dangerously calm — as if mentally counting to ten.

"HAAAHAAAH!"

His ears felt like they were about to burn off.

"HHHNNAHHHHHHH!" The twink, a blonde man who reminded Harry of his coworker Draco, arched his back off the mattress as he came a second time in the video.

"Oh, baby," muttered the the other man performing. "We're only getting started..."

Harry glanced at the sidebar. One hour and forty minutes of hellish torture left.

"Ooohhh, I wanna ride dick—big dick—"

"That's it," Riddle said testily, grabbing for Harry's laptop. It was only thanks to his fast reflexes that Harry managed to avoid Riddle. "Give it to me."

Harry jumped off the bed, cradling his precious laptop in his arms.

Unfortunately, Riddle got up from the bed as well, eyeing Harry's laptop with murderous intent. He was still wearing nothing but boxers, and tantalizingly naked skin came closer, and *closer*—

Harry stumbled backwards a few more steps, hastily placing his laptop on the desk behind him.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" He faced Riddle, crossing his arms and leaning back against the desk.

"Give it *here*," Riddle enunciated lowly, looking at him with a no-nonsense expression. "So I can toss your bloody laptop out of the window."

Harry's eyes went wide. *"Hell no!"*

Riddle's eyes seemed to glimmer red in the dim lighting, narrowing viciously. Recognizing the look, Harry instinctively straightened up, spreading his arms out in front of the desk to protect his Toshiba, his *baby*.

"Stand aside, you silly boy... stand aside, *now*."

“Not my Toshiba, please *no*—”

Why was Harry feeling the strangest sense of... *deja vu*? And now Riddle was looking at him strangely once more, and Harry found he no longer had the energy to try and decipher—

“You... are you quoting *James Evans* at me?”

Harry blinked slowly, before gasping. No wonder. “*You* were quoting *James Evans* at *me!*”

“Lord Slytherin, actually.”

They stood very still, staring into each other’s eyes as porn played in the background.

Riddle’s eyes were glinting knowingly, which made Harry remember that the man *had* been the main editor for Roaring’s *James Evans* series and that, *oh my god*, he’d recently read some of Harry’s Jarvolo smut so he probably suspected—

“Right.” Harry said eventually, trying not to think about anything in particular. “Okay, here’s the plan. I’m just going to stuff this laptop into the deepest, darkest corner of my suitcase and hope—”

Riddle held a hand to Harry’s mouth, cutting him off.

“Ah,” he said after a pause, his eyes wide. “We... are idiots.”

He looked at Harry’s bedside table, the source of all the noise and all their problems. “We should be dealing with the speaker.”

Before Harry could stop him, Riddle was at his bedside table, picking up the bluetooth speaker and turning it in all directions. With a new feeling of dread, Harry realized exactly what he was looking for.

“There’s no power button,” he said, before clarifying, “It’s an auto-off speaker — only turning off once audio stops streaming from it.”

Riddle froze.

And then, with a newfound rage, his boss was stalking towards the only window in their room.

“NO— *STOP* !” Harry scrambled away from his laptop as Riddle’s hand attached to the window’s latch. No way, that jerk was *not* throwing out the precious speaker Sirius had given him for his birthday. God, this man had no concept of value — *he* may have been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but these electronics were all Harry had.

Riddle’s hand clenched tightly on the latch, his naked back to Harry as he continued to face the window. “Be grateful these innkeepers *child-proofed* the window—though, perhaps I should simply *break* it...”

Harry finally snatched his speaker back, holding it to his chest. And surprisingly, Riddle had made no movement to avoid Harry, nor even shown any reaction at all...

He simply continued to stare out of the window for a few moments, oddly calm.

“Forget it,” Riddle said quietly, still turned away. “The whole inn has heard by now anyways. In fact, I’m surprised that no one has come knocking at our door yet...”

He tilted his head sideways, and Harry caught the assessing glint in his eyes. “Unless, of course,

the innkeepers lied to us and there *are* no guests in this decrepit place—”

Riddle stopped talking halfway.

Because their room’s window was right next to the shared wall, and the wall was *shaking*... as if being *pounded into*—

And maybe it was because they’d been so caught up in their own affairs that they hadn’t noticed, but judging by the voices on the other side, this had been happening for a while.

“Hnnngh, honey I’m close — *ah* !”

A woman’s voice.

She moaned again, and Harry flinched, snapping out of it.

“Something...” His voice was faint, “Something tells me our neighbors don’t mind.”

The wall was shaking again — a minor sort of quaking that would not have been visible nor tangible from their bed. But the reason behind it was painfully clear.

The woman moaned again, even louder, and Riddle hissed in displeasure as Harry held his hands up to his ears.

“Oh my *fucking*—”

“Don’t... ” Riddle’s voice was strangled, “Don’t *say* that word. This inn is cursed.”

Harry shuddered. “Agreed.”

And without facing further protest, he stuffed the laptop and his speaker into the deepest corner of his stuffed suitcase. It seemed Riddle was just as drained as him, because he didn’t even argue when Harry slid into bed next to him.

He wrapped himself in the blankets, burying his face into a pillow. At least the couple next door wasn’t audible from here.

Ironically, the stressful accident of playing porn in front of his boss had successfully gotten rid of his boner at some point.

Harry closed his eyes, willing away thoughts of what had occurred in the past few hours.

With the sounds of two men fucking still playing faintly from his suitcase, he finally fell asleep.

. . .

The writer’s convention was hectic.

Potential authors had been throwing their manuscripts left and right at him, pitching their story concepts at the Morsmordre booth and leaving before Harry had even finished absorbing the previous two. And now there was a huge pile of unread manuscripts and Harry was so *behind*—

“*Faster,* ” Riddle hissed into his ear, as the latest writer left their booth. “You’ll never become an editor if you read this slowly.”

Harry bit back a scowl. “Sorry, *sir,* ” he forced himself to say. Even though *he* was the one reading every single manuscript, filtering them by his boss’s criteria, while Riddle was only reading the ones in the ‘ *good pile.* ’

Riddle’s eyes flashed, undoubtedly picking up Harry’s sarcasm. But anything he might have said was interrupted by the announcement that lunch break was now in session.

Bless. Harry jumped up and walked away with a “later, boss” before Riddle could protest, making his way to the Indian take-out line.

He ran a hand through his hair, sighing as he swiped into his phone. Being around Riddle was exhausting, and he was already drained from last night. And while neither of them had mentioned last night’s Porn Scare this morning (and what an awkward morning they’d had), many incriminating details about Harry’s life had just been put out there on display, in front of the one person he would never have wanted to see them and...

Yes, Harry was definitely stressed for multiple reasons right now.

At least he was doing something he enjoyed this time. Editing and scouting talent was somewhat tedious at times, but nevertheless, satisfying overall.

As he sat down at a table alone and started digging into his spicy samosa chaat, his phone buzzed with a Discord notification.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Well, no need to explain.

Harry paused in confusion, his eyes traveling upwards for context. Explain wh—?

[Yesterday at 1:36 AM]

>> **lightning_boi**: They drove me *nuts*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: More like they drove you *to* nut.

>> **lightning_boi**: Nutting? God, I *wish*.

Oh.

Harry’s face began to redden. Explain the fact that Harry had stated his desire to ejaculate to Voldemort’s works... while under the haze of a hard-on and caught up in many other factors.

Right. Thanks, Lord Voldemort. Hopefully, the period at the end was more of a grammatical thing and less of a passive-aggressive statement.

>> **lightning_boi**: Ah, thanks. I was in a difficult position last night, so thanks for understanding.

Harry sent the message, drumming his fingers against the cafeteria table while trying to come up with something better to say.

>> **lightning_boi**: So how are yol [Send]

He started deleting his message, disgusted with himself. Engaging in *small talk* with his favorite

author would be a disgrace.

So, instead, because Harry was genuinely interested—

>> **lightning_boi:** So how's writing been going for you?

At last, Lord_Voldemort_ began typing back.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Quite well. I'm on track to publish my next chapter next week, but my green-eyed monster is being rather difficult.

Harry reread the message, eyes narrowing.

>> **lightning_boi:** Your green-eyed monster — as in, your chapter?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** No. As in... *my* actual green-eyed monster. My muse... and my coworker.

Harry grinned.

>> **lightning_boi:** You weren't lying when you said you projected, huh?

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I'd be lying if I said I didn't project.

He huffed, shaking his head and rolling his eyes upward.

>> **lightning_boi:** Stop speaking in riddles. You're not the only one who projects.

Harry glanced away, to where Riddle was standing in line, waiting for Italian food. The man was staring intently at his phone.

>> **lightning_boi:** I, too... have a boss from hell.

Harry glanced at his boss again... frowning when he realized that Riddle was *smiling* down at his phone. No doubt about it — he was clearly chatting with the same person from last night.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** What a dramatic little boy you are.

Harry's mouth quirked. With a hint of daring, he sent:

>> **lightning_boi:** You *like* it.

Out of the corner of his eye, Harry glanced at Riddle once more. It was habit by this point, really. Call it survival instinct... or even human nature. Most eyes in a room tended to be drawn to Riddle anyways, given how tall and handsome he was.

What was *not* habit, however, was the way Riddle's ears had turned positively pink.

The man was still staring at his phone.

Blood rushed in Harry's ears. He nearly stood up. There was a growling beast in his chest and he didn't know what to make of it. But it was definitely displeased with the way Riddle was staring down at his phone screen... nearly *blushing* at words written by some random chick.

His pinging phone snapped him out of his craze, stopping him before he could do something stupid like stalking up to the bastard.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: I do. Want to be my new muse?

Voldemort knocked the *breath* out of him.

Harry felt his own cheeks burn.

>> **lightning_boi**: I do (~♡~)~

>> **lightning_boi**: Look at us, saying our vows already.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: You'll be *Chained* to me before you know it.

Harry sucked in a breath, completely caught off guard. That... was the name of one of his fanfics.

>> **lightning_boi**: Did you just... pun me? With my own work?

And then, with more vigor—

>> **lightning_boi**: Was that a *Freudian Slip* or an intentional innuendo?

At this point, their messages were rapid-fire.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Well, *Paranoia and Puns* happen to be my specialty.

Harry grinned like a fool. Of course they were, Mr. *Nevermind the end*.

>> **lightning_boi**: Oh, my Lord, you're playing *A Dangerous Game* here. There's *No Glory* in low quality puns.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: No worries, sweetheart, I happen to have a *Sickly-Sweet Obsession* with wordplay. It is *Unlikely* that you will be able to keep up.

Harry smirked.

>> **lightning_boi**: For *Your Approval, Sir?* I'll do anything to keep up.

And thus began their punfest, with references blending into their conversation so seamlessly only a Jarvolo fan would be able to pick them out.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: So it seems your next update for the Office AU is *Unplanned*.

>> **lightning_boi**: Yeah, what can I say? *Words Fail* me.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: *Again and Again*.

>> **lightning_boi**: Hey!

Harry muffled his laughter.

He was deeply offended. He could not stop *smiling*. What was this insanity?

>> **lightning_boi**: I never said I would *Abandon* it!

>> **Lord_Voldemort_**: Oh, small mercies.

>> **lightning_boi:** Seriously, though. I haven't been able to write lately... I think I need a *Diagnosis*.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Writer's block can be cured by anything... even *The Love of a Good Wizard*.

Harry's chest began to thump wildly.

>> **lightning_boi:** Are you offering, Lord Voldemort? We've already said our marriage vows, after all.

There was a pause on the chat.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I wouldn't mind *The Consequences of a Binding Ritual*... if I was bound to you.

Harry put a hand up to his mouth, eyes wide.

This was starting to feel more... serious. And he wasn't good at that sort of thing.

So he switched back to their previous topic.

>> **lightning_boi:** Well, writer's block isn't the only thing holding me back. Some of my earlier chapters are actual trash — they need to be *Rewritten* at some point.

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** I'll give you *47 Days to Change* them.

Harry's eyebrows rose.

>> **lightning_boi:** And if it takes me longer?

Another pause on the chat. Then—

>> **Lord_Voldemort_:** Then I won't beta for you.

Harry spluttered on his spicy chaat, his throat burning and mouth suddenly too parched for multiple reasons.

>> **lightning_boi:** you

>> **lightning_boi:** you were going to *offer*?

>> **lightning_boi:** *oh my!* [Send]

“Harry?”

“*God!*” Harry finished out loud, startling at the sound of Riddle's voice so close to him. As usual, the man had crept on him from behind. “Ridd— *sir*, a bit more warning please!”

Riddle stared down at him, his mouth drawn tight with displeasure. None of his attitude detracted from deliciously distracting way his suit flattered his form. His shoulders somehow appeared even broader, *crisper* in the outfit.

His boss hadn't shaved this morning either, but the five o'clock shadow he sported was... *mouthwatering*...

“You’re behind on the pile of manuscripts. Now is a good time to catch up—before the writers reconvene.”

Now was a good time, indeed. Now—his only break between now and the end of the convention.

“Of course, sir,” Harry sighed, cracking his knuckles and picking up his tray. It was a good thing he was enjoying his work — otherwise, Riddle’s workaholic tendencies would have been utterly unbearable.

Back to work, then.

. . .

It was half past midnight when they finished.

The actual writer’s convention itself had ended hours ago, right before six in the evening. But Riddle had declared that they wouldn’t leave until they’d finished looking through every single manuscript.

Even when the booths were being cleaned up and packed away, his boss had simply found them an empty meeting room in which to continue working.

And now the building was completely empty... completely dark, save for the room they were working in.

“Done,” Harry said softly, pushing his laptop away from him and leaning his head upon his palms. He rubbed his eyes sleepily beneath his glasses, his vision blurry from all the manuscripts he’d read.

“Is that the last pile?” Riddle’s voice sounded in front of him, hoarse and rough.

Harry nodded as he got up, stuffing the pile into his backpack. “Yes—the rest are rejected manuscripts.” He picked up the rejections, stuffing them in the nearest recycling bin.

“And have you sent out emails to the writers we’re considering?”

Harry nodded again, yawning. “Yes, sir.”

He walked forward a few steps before he was suddenly overcome by dizziness. Closing his eyes as he swayed on his feet, Harry reached out a hand to place against the wall, leaning against it.

A nice, warm wall.

“*Harry,*” a soft voice murmured, with clear amusement, but Harry ignored it. He was warm, and so very... comfortable...

After a few moments, warm hands grabbed Harry’s wrists, removing them with surprising gentleness.

“The elevator is here.” Fingers flicked his forehead, and the soft voice grew firmer. “*Wake up.*”

His eyes opened on command.

“Euurgh!” Harry jumped away from Riddle, whom he’d been *leaning against*, clutching at like a lifeline. How embarrassing. “Why didn’t wake me?”

Riddle raised his eyebrows explanatorily, and that was all the response Harry needed to flush twice as hard.

As they got into the elevator, the older man pressed the button to the parking garage floor and turned to face Harry. “I got us separate rooms at the Hilton not too far from here.”

Harry breathed out a sigh of relief, feeling himself warm at the mere *thought* of luxury and privacy. “Thank you.”

They stayed quiet as the lift fell shut and started moving downwards, more out of tiredness than awkwardness by this point. And that familiar vertigo hit him once more, but Harry suppressed it, focusing on the ever-decreasing floor number displayed above the closed doors.

Nine... eight... sev—

The elevator jerked to a stop.

The lights went out completely, submerging them in darkness.

Chapter End Notes

...And so, Lord_Voldemort_'s Stuck-in-the-Elevator scene comes to life.

End Notes

Find me on [tumblr](#) or the [tomarrymort discord](#) (I tend to lurk around there a lot)!

EDIT 7/10/2019: haha I'm excited by how many people are joining the tomarrymort discord but just a heads up, it's 16+!

(Also, I have no idea if this is how publishing companies actually work. So feel free to let me know if I've made any logistical errors!)

Works inspired by this [one](#) [Where Our Worlds Meet](#) by [Luxis](#), [Zombu7](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!